



***‘Waiheke is a community, not a commodity’*: Stakeholder perspectives on future Waiheke tourism**

Project Forever Waiheke
Waiheke Island
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¹ The quote in the report title is taken from respondent comments in the 2021 *Project Forever Waiheke* survey of Waiheke residents.

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A. Report summary – Key findings, conclusions and recommendations²

Research aims and approach

This comprehensive mixed-method research, undertaken from December 2020 to July 2021, comprised:

- A survey of visitor satisfaction relating to Waiheke visits (n=991)
- A survey of Waiheke residents' perspectives on future tourism on the island (n=294; 43% engaged in tourism services)
- A survey of pandemic impacts on Waiheke tourism-related businesses (n= 98)
- In-depth interviews with managers of essential services on Waiheke (n=23) – health and emergency services; water, waste management, wildlife and conservation/regeneration services; transport, infrastructure and accommodation services; budgeting and community advice/support; and governance (Local Board)
- An analysis of five Waiheke social media sites December 2020-May 2021.

The aims of the project were to identify and report:

- The nature and extent of the positive and negative impacts of recent tourism levels on Waiheke's environments, including the community itself, in the views of residents
- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism businesses
- What visitors to Waiheke value most.

Key research findings

Visitors' satisfaction

- The features that visitors valued Waiheke for most reflected the experience of not being in an urban environment – that is, the beauty of the coastal, rural and bush scenery, the friendliness, the quiet and laid-back feel, the sense of getting away from the city – and being able to access all of those features easily from Auckland or beyond (p 13). These are the same essential aspects of Waiheke for which residents choose to live there, and that they wish to have protected.
- Aspects of their visit that disappointed visitors most – transport issues and congestion, along with the expensiveness of the ferry, food and accommodation (p 14) – reflected similar concerns to those of Waiheke residents about the island's recent development and changes due significantly to high-volume tourism.

Residents' experiences and perceptions of tourism on Waiheke

- 'Increased personal or household income from a tourism-related business' in the past 5 years on Waiheke was identified by fewer than one third of residents overall – notably, only 8% of people not engaged in tourism services, compared with 56% of those engaged in tourism (p 18).
- Almost half (42%) of people not engaged in providing tourism services, and 13% of those who were engaged in tourism, identified zero benefits of Waiheke tourism for them personally (p 18).

² Page references in this Summary are to detailed sections later in this Report.

- The benefits of increased tourism identified most often by residents (25%-48%) were better recreational opportunities, some improvements to infrastructure, and improved availability of some services and products (p 18).
- The vast majority of residents (92%) identified negative impacts on their lives they saw as from recent tourism. All negative impacts were experienced more commonly among residents not engaged in providing tourism services (except for problems relating to access to accommodation, and some 'other' impacts) (p 19).
- The negative tourism impacts identified most commonly (p 19) related to: the ferry services (87% of respondents); road congestion (57%); pollution and other damage to the natural or built environment, in both public and private spaces (50%); and problems with access to island amenities and services (51%). One third of residents had identified difficulties variously in: finding affordable accommodation (34%); damage to Waiheke wildlife (33%); and feeling COVID-unsafe on the passenger ferries (30%).

Managing tourism impacts

- Overtourism has been widely acknowledged internationally in the past decade as eroding the sustainability of communities and damaging natural, social and built environments. [Recent New Zealand studies](#) and [reports](#) have identified widespread overtourism impacts in New Zealand, especially on small communities³ (p 8). With a resident population of around 9,500, *Waiheke received approximately 1.3 million unique visitors in the peak tourist season of 2016/2017.*⁴
- There is a strong sentiment among the Waiheke community that the island cannot sustain pre-pandemic tourism volumes without serious degradation to the island's community and natural environments, and to the 'special character' of the island. All essential services on the island are stressed by overtourism in extended peak tourist periods (p 31-33).
- Visitor numbers prior to 2020 were seen as 'too many' by 52% of residents not engaged in tourism business, compared with 24% of those engaged in tourism; 38% of all residents viewed pre-2020 numbers as "about the right number", and only 13% thought the island could accommodate more than pre-2020 volumes. Unlimited tourist numbers were supported by only 29% of all residents, primarily those providing tourism services (p 20).
- The majority of Waiheke residents, including many engaged in providing tourism services, wanted daily visitor numbers and visitor vehicles to be capped, to prevent further damage. Residents' open comments, including residents working in tourism, commonly voiced a wish for a cap on visitor numbers, based on the carrying capacity of Waiheke's infrastructure (p 38). Limiting visitor numbers was seen as necessary to providing locals with reasonable priority access to essential services, in particular housing, water security, and priority resident access to work and essential medical care in Auckland (p 28).

³ For detailed analysis of overtourism in New Zealand, see: Andrea Insch (2021) New Zealand. In M. Honey & K. Frenkiel (Eds.) *Overtourism: Lessons for a better future* (pp. 300-312). Washington, DC: Island Press; Andrea Insch (2021) [The challenges of over-tourism facing New Zealand: Risks and responses.](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212571X19301453) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212571X19301453>. Andrea Insch is a Professor in the University of Otago Business School.

⁴ Auckland Council. *Evaluating the Waiheke Governance Pilot: Three Years On*. February 2021 Technical Report 2021/13, p 5.

- Nearly one third of all residents (30%) felt COVID-unsafe currently on the ferries, and residents' concerns with visitors' (and some residents') non-compliance with masking regulations have been repeatedly reported on Waiheke social media (p 20).
- Residents and other stakeholders want the island's tourism products and services to focus on low-impact activities and eco-tourism. International actions to mitigate overtourism impacts demonstrate that that focus can be achieved through regulation of tourism operations, including (but not limited to): limits on daily visitor arrivals; licensing of and/or limits to visitor accommodation, non-resident vehicles, tourist transport options, and tour operations involving groups of people and/or bus transport; limiting access to fragile natural environments, including beaches and forests; and noise and space controls (see **Appendix 1**)
- Island residents engaged in tourism service provision perceived a need (i) for the broader Waiheke community to acknowledge the importance to a proportion of the Waiheke population of opportunities to earn an income through tourism, and (ii) for tourism products or licensing on Waiheke to give priority to long-term Waiheke tourism businesses (p 33-35).
- The voluntary work of residents as the kaitiaki of Waiheke's natural and community environments is acknowledged as essential to restoring and maintaining those environments for the future (p 26).

Regulating to prevent overtourism impacts

- Targeted regulation is seen by residents as needed urgently, and as achievable, in order to effect limits on the aspects of overtourism that have been identified as a major contributor to Waiheke's current unresolved problems, in particular: acute housing crisis and homelessness; chronic ferry transport problems; traffic and other congestion; stress on essential services and infrastructure; and disruption to residents' equitable access to essential resources (p 38-43).
- Regulatory action has been demonstrated as effective internationally in achieving a balance whereby tourism in sustainable numbers can occur to the benefit of communities. Around the globe, governments have acted in the past decade to enact targeted laws and regulations to protect natural and community environments, in recognition both that these environments are due protection for moral and legal reasons, and that they are an essential component of the tourism attraction itself. Protective restrictions have been implemented effectively in many high-volume destinations to prevent overtourism impacts (see **Appendix 1**); all of these are in principle available to protect Waiheke environments:
 - Limiting daily visitor/tourist arrival numbers, to remove congestion, enable residents' access to essential services, and protect and restore natural and heritage environments (p 48)
 - Capping and licensing Airbnb and other holiday accommodation, to mitigate residential housing crises (p 45)
 - Banning or limiting tourist and visitor vehicles, to reduce traffic congestion and protect natural and built environments (p 48)
 - Levying or taxing some tourism activities, to fund infrastructure repairs and maintenance due to tourism impacts (p 50)

- Banning some tourism activities, to prevent noise, sea and air pollution, littering, and abusive tourist behaviour towards residents (p 51-53)
- Closing tourist access to vulnerable or damaged locations, for limited or extended periods, to enable essential restoration (p 53-55)
- Restricting some tourist activities, to prevent animal or habitat abuse (p 54-55).

Governance

- Residents want the Waiheke Local Board to have greater control of decisions and planning related to the island's infrastructure development. They saw Auckland Council as consistently failing to understand the special character and value of Waiheke's natural and community environments, and what is needed to sustain those environments in a semi-rural island context.

People come to Waiheke to experience our unique lifestyle and the beauty of the island, but in allowing unfettered tourism we are basically killing the golden goose. Locals need to have more say in how many visitors we think is beneficial for the island - we need to be involved in the conversation much more than we have been up to now. We should be following the tenets of 'Essentially Waiheke', which is a document created by Waihekians for Waiheke. We live here; we are not a 'destination' to be milked by AT and AC.⁵ This is our home.⁶

Tourism is good for many people. But need to make the island affordable for the ordinary people who live on the island and maintain the income for businesses when tourists aren't around.

It's a wonderful place. Let's be kind and share it.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Waiheke now needs **planning for regenerative/sustainable community, tourism and economic development** that has the following features:
 - Is not about more tourism growth, but **develops the total Waiheke community and economy, in concert**, including (i) ways to build diversification away from reliance on tourism, consistent with the [Ministry of Tourism's 2021 'reset' strategy](#), and (ii) a focus on vocational training and support for Waiheke residents to populate tourism and hospitality jobs
 - Is **evidence-based**, including the findings in this report, and robust research on Waiheke's carrying capacity for regenerative human occupation by mana whenua and other permanent residents, given climate change predictions
 - **Goes beyond proposing [sustainable tourism strategy for Waiheke](#)**, which has already been comprehensively developed, in 2018-19, with broad community, tourism sector and Local Board consultation
 - **Proposes concrete options for the priority imperatives to avoiding impacts of overtourism**, as identified by Waiheke residents, especially:
 - Prioritising residents' access to essential resources and services

⁵ Referring to Auckland Transport and Auckland Council.

⁶ All research participant quotes are provided verbatim, and selected to represent the range of viewpoints provided.

- Devolving control to the Waiheke Local Board for regulating transport, water supply, infrastructure development, waste management, and tourism accommodation
 - Government regulation of passenger and vehicle ferry operations, including mandating priority access at all sailings to Waiheke residents and essential services
 - Licensing of tourism and hospitality operators on the island
 - Placing limits on the daily numbers of day-trippers and non-resident vehicles.
2. Planning needs to focus on feasible ***formulae for implementation of regulatory and policy actions***, all of which have precedents in the responses of local and national governments in other jurisdictions internationally where action has been taken to support the social and environmental recovery and resilience of communities damaged by overtourism (see p 43, and **Appendix 1**).
 3. Given the popularity of Waiheke to tourists in the ongoing pandemic context, and [visitors' common flouting of masking requirements](#), an interim plan is needed for ***protecting the Waiheke community from a COVID-19 outbreak on the island***, through either unregulated ferry travel or uncontrolled visitor access to the island as NZ experiences a community outbreak of the Delta variant, and when the international borders re-open. Air New Zealand has already [suspended in-flight refreshments](#) in recognition of the risks of contagion in-flight. Methods being implemented currently in Europe focus on limiting access to popular tourist destinations to people who present a valid COVID vaccination certificate along with photo ID.⁷ However the [NZ government is now considering stricter controls](#), which should be considered by the Waiheke Police, Local Board and health agencies. Regulation is needed urgently to require people to keep masks on for the entire trip, including queuing and disembarking, and security officers to be employed on the trip so vulnerable passengers are protected.
 4. Consistent with the recommendations of the February 2021 [Evaluating the Waiheke Governance Pilot: Three Years On](#) (p ii), devolution to the Waiheke Local Board of “further delegations and/or increased governance responsibilities”.

⁷“It is a bit annoying’: Italy’s Covid pass restrictions kick in” (2021)
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/06/italy-covid-green-pass-restrictions-kick-in-france>

B. Research background, aims and approach

Overtourism internationally and in New Zealand

Overtourism has been widely acknowledged internationally in the past decade as eroding the sustainability of communities and damaging natural, social and built environments. [Beautiful islands have been especially affected; governments have been slow](#) to recognise the problem until very recently; and in some places there is a concern that the [damage to natural environments and communities may become irreparable](#). Recent New Zealand studies ([see Insch, 2020](#)) and [reports](#) have also identified overtourism impacts as common across high-volume ‘hot spots’ in New Zealand, especially affecting small communities, and asked whether tourism numbers need to be significantly reduced. Recent reports from the [Tourism Futures Taskforce](#) and the [Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment](#) both concluded that, despite pandemic impacts, New Zealand needed to manage tourism numbers to avoid irreversible environmental degradation and [further loss of ‘social licence’](#).

Planning for tourism in New Zealand

The [2019 Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment](#) asserted that the “terms of our hospitality (manaakitanga) and responsibility for looking after our tourist destinations (kaitiakitanga) are *ones the wider community, not just the industry, should determine*” (p 6). The 2020 pandemic provided a unique opportunity for New Zealand to pause and reflect on how to protect our communities and natural environments. With a new tourism Minister, [government policy has been significantly ‘reset’](#), and several communities are considering how tourism needs to be changed to prevent overtourism impacts. Notably, [Milford Sound recently announced a plan](#) to reduce tourism volumes.

Overtourism on Waiheke Island

Since 2018, a number of studies, including research undertaken by Auckland Council, have demonstrated that Waiheke Island’s natural, built and social/community environments have been negatively impacted by the recent major increases in tourist volumes (Allpress et al, 2018, 2021; *Project Forever Waiheke*, 2018, 2020) – estimated by Auckland Council as 1.3 million visitors in 2016/2017.⁸ In the past five years, the Waiheke community has repeatedly raised concerns, through a range of platforms, over increasing problems related to the provision of basic essential services – housing, water security, essential commuter travel for work and medical needs, health services – noting that those problems are both directly and indirectly attributable to the increases in tourism. Those problems have become exacerbated in the past 5-6 years as the island has been aggressively promoted to tourists both overseas and nationally in New Zealand. The Waiheke Local Board has acknowledged the issues in public meetings and [recent media statements](#).

In the autumn/winter of 2020, when the COVID-19 ‘lockdowns’ prevented the now usual huge volumes of tourists on the island, *Project Forever Waiheke* and the University of Auckland School of Environment undertook a small [research project on pandemic impacts for the Waiheke community](#). Through key stakeholder interviews and a resident survey, people were asked “In what ways has the absence of tourists due to the COVID-19

⁸ Auckland Council. [Evaluating the Waiheke Governance Pilot: Three Years On](#). February 2021 Technical Report 2021/13, p 5.

lockdowns been either negative or positive for Waiheke Island?” Negative impacts were related almost solely to reduced income for respondents, or a fear of reduced income. On the positive side, Waiheke residents observed a remarkable recovery in many aspects of the island’s social and natural environments.⁹ Bird and [aquatic life was significantly more visible and vibrant](#); reduced traffic congestion resulted in more people feeling safe to walk on the roadsides; people came to know their neighbours better through increased street and community contact, as locals were more able to access the beaches and cafés commonly previously dominated in summer by tourists. That is, [locals rediscovered the ‘essential’ Waiheke community and natural environments](#).

As a result, Waihekeans recognised that the phenomenon of ‘overtourism’ had resulted in residents gradually accommodating ever greater erosion of their right to enjoy their own neighbourhoods and the very aspects of the island for which people had chosen to live here; in essence, the continued absence of tourists gave residents an opportunity reset their tolerance levels or ‘social licence’ for high-volume tourism.

Positive for the environment, local social cohesion and individual well-being. It is pleasing to not have tourists gawking at the locals, dropping litter, adding to island waste stream, becoming intoxicated and behaving badly. The island needs and welcomes visitors who stay the night and spend locally, but not overseas package day trippers who add nothing to the local economy but add to local costs and overburden the infrastructure.

Wonderfully quiet land, peaceful like the old days! However my sales are down because of lack of overseas visitors... However I do not think we should promote more tourism than we had – I prefer less!

Reducing reliance on tourism was also seen as desirable for the health of the Waiheke economy; 29% of suggestions in response to a question on how Waiheke could become more resilient to such crises were to reduce reliance on tourism and diversify the Waiheke economy.

Tourism management planning for Waiheke

To obtain more detailed and recent information, in December 2020 *Project Forever Waiheke* scoped the design of a mixed method research programme, to provide robust, up-to-date data on tourism issues to the Local Board, Auckland Council, and the Waiheke community at large, for the purposes of planning for managed tourism, in order to avoid continuing the damaging impacts of recent years. The aims of the project were to identify:

- The nature and extent of the positive and negative impacts of recent tourism levels on Waiheke’s natural, built and community/social environments, in the views of residents
- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism businesses
- What visitors to Waiheke value most.

⁹ *Waiheke Identities and Response to the Pandemic: Report on research into pandemic impacts for the Waiheke community*. Research presentation, Waiheke Island, 4 November 2020.

In March 2021, [Auckland Unlimited](#) (formerly ATEED) commissioned the development of a [Destination Management Plan](#) (DMP), from Australasian company Stafford Strategy. The proposal document for the DMP stated (p 1-2) that:

The major cause of concern, as understood from the Local Board, is that residents across all demographics have chosen to live on the island with its own intrinsic values – including its unspoilt nature. Mass tourism is widely perceived to threaten that nature and the sense of community – the quintessential values that also contribute to making Waiheke a popular destination for locals and visitors alike. ... As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, there is now a clear recognition of the value *and costs* [emphasis added] of tourism to both Waiheke and Great Barrier, and a commitment to develop a collaborative and sustainable destination plan.”

The development of the DMP was directed to focus on “visitor growth scenarios”, “product development”, and “the need for changes to supporting infrastructure to help ensure the visitor economy was highly sustainable”¹⁰ (p 4-5), and on “balancing out the needs of local community desires with visitor interest and demand to visit” (p 5).

The [2021 Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment](#) noted (p 39) specifically that:

Mana whenua and communities situated near major tourism attractions often have little control over visitor numbers, nor the financial resources to invest in initiatives to mitigate the pressures from visitor growth. Over time, the weight of visitors can put at risk some of the qualities that made places attractive to live in and visit in the first place... This means developing a genuine, community-owned destination management plan – as distinct from a destination marketing plan... consistent with the sort of tourism residents, mana whenua and local businesses want in their midst.

While the *Project Forever Waiheke* research reported here was planned and designed before any advice that Auckland Unlimited was intending to undertake a DMP exercise for Waiheke, the data obtained provide essential, up-to-date information immediately relevant to it.

This report expands on a [‘Submission to the Auckland Unlimited Destination Management Planning Process’](#) provided to Stafford Strategy on 21 August 2021. It focuses explicitly on identifying tangible, achievable actions to mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism on Waiheke Island’s community and natural environments (see in particular Sections E-F and Appendix 1).

Data collection and analysis methods

A mixed-methods research project comprised the following triangulated investigation. Full detail on the research methods is provided in **Appendix 2**.

- In-depth interviews with key personnel (n=23) managing essential services on Waiheke Island, including: health and emergency services; water, waste management, wildlife and conservation/regeneration services; transport, infrastructure and accommodation services; budgeting and community advice/support; and governance (Local Board)
- Three separate 2021 surveys sought information respectively from:

¹⁰ It is unclear whether ‘sustainable’ is used here to mean economic sustainability, or environmental and community sustainability.

- Visitors to Waiheke, both NZ and overseas visitors (n=991)
- Waiheke residents, both those engaged in tourism and those not (n=294)
- Waiheke businesses engaged either directly or indirectly in providing tourism services (n=98)
- Questions for the resident interviews and surveys canvassed the following broad topics:
 - Positive and negative impacts of tourism for residents, including those engaged and not engaged in providing tourism services on Waiheke
 - Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism-related businesses on Waiheke
 - Desired tourist volumes in the future
 - Actions needed “to manage future tourism on Waiheke and its impacts”
 - Open comments “about future tourism on Waiheke”
- The visitor satisfaction and tourism business surveys were undertaken in collaboration with Waiheke Island Tourism Inc.
- A social media analysis canvassed Facebook posts from December 2020 to May 2021, across the five main Waiheke community Facebook sites¹¹, to identify common emergent themes that were directly or indirectly related to tourism
- A comprehensive international evidence review of overtourism impacts, including both peer-reviewed and ‘grey’ literature
- All data collection was undertaken from March-July 2021
- To provide independence, the interviews, social media analysis, and analysis of the qualitative survey data were undertaken by experienced independent researchers with no residential or other close links to Waiheke.

Research limitation

Project Forever Waiheke acknowledges the absence of explicit representative mana whenua and tangata whenua voices in this report. We appreciate and respect that Ngāti Paoa and Piritahi Marae have developed their own approach to providing input into destination management planning for Waiheke. Māori voices, including both mana whenua and taurahere residents, have been included in the interviews, surveys and social media analysis undertaken in the present study.

Report features

Layout of the report

The report has the following structure:

<i>Executive summary and conclusions</i>	Brief summary of the data from all sources
<i>The views of recent visitors to Waiheke</i>	Data from a 2021 visitor satisfaction survey
<i>The views of Waiheke residents</i>	Data from resident surveys 2020-2021, social media, and interviews with managers of Waiheke essential services
<i>Description of priority areas for management to prevent future overtourism</i>	Recommendations provided through resident surveys 2021 and interviews with managers of Waiheke essential services
<i>Data on COVID-19 pandemic impacts on tourism businesses</i>	Data from a survey of Waiheke tourism-related businesses

¹¹ Waiheke Community Page; Waiheke Community Noticeboard; Waiheke Island People’s Parliament; Waiheke Matters; Waiheke Whinge.

<i>Appendix 1</i>	Summary of government regulations implemented internationally to mitigate overtourism
<i>Appendix 2</i>	Detail on research methods
<i>Appendix 3</i>	Summary of pandemic impacts on Waiheke tourism business sector

Terminology

- The terms ‘visitor’ and ‘tourist’ are used interchangeably. The UN World Tourism Organisation defines a tourist as “visitor [who] is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the ... place visited. These trips taken by visitors qualify as tourism trips. Tourism refers to the activity of visitors.”¹²
- ‘Overtourism’ is used where it reflects the UN WTO definition as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way”;¹³ that is, where tourism levels exceed “the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, and sociocultural environment” of the location....”¹⁴
- This report has largely avoided using the terms ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’, as the concept is now widely acknowledged as both ambiguous (e.g. environmental versus economic sustainability) and inappropriate in relation to protecting environments *already* damaged by overtourism.

Presentation of data

- Quantitative data are provided in tables, with comparisons across respondent parameters where significant differences were apparent in views or experience.
- Because much of the data comprised responses to open questions, those data are provided comprehensively through verbatim quotes from survey respondents and interviewees (including the original spelling and grammar in survey responses). Quotes have been selected to represent the full range of views, including those of Waiheke residents who work in the tourism sector as well as those who do not.

¹² United Nations (2008) International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics.
https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf#page=21

¹³ Overtourism? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth Beyond Perceptions: Case Studies. (2018) UN WTO
<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284419999>

¹⁴ Overtourism? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth Beyond Perceptions: Case Studies. (2019) UN WTO
<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420070>

C. What visitors value most about Waiheke

This section reports the findings of an anonymous online survey of 2016-2021 visitors to Waiheke, undertaken from March-July 2021.

Visitor characteristics

Of the 991 total visitor survey respondents, 82% had visited within the past 12 months, 15% in 2018-2019, and the remainder in 2016-2017. Eighty percent were NZers, 6% from the US, 5% each from Australia and the UK, and the rest from Asia and continental Europe.¹⁵ Of the NZ respondents, two thirds (67%) were from the greater Auckland region, 26% from other North Island areas, and the remaining 7% from elsewhere in NZ. Around a third each were aged over 55 (33%), 40-55 (37%), and under 40 (30%). For a quarter (26%) it was their first visit to Waiheke, 21% had visited 1-2 times previously, 32% had visited 3-10 times, and 21% had visited more than 10 times. Respondents' main reasons for visiting Waiheke were that: it was close to Auckland (25%), they'd visited before "and loved it" (31%), because someone else had chosen that destination or recommended it (16%), for a particular event or activity (6%), to visit friends or family (7%), or as part of a tourist package (5%).

The majority (71%) had arrived by passenger ferry, 25% by car ferry, and the remainder by private transport, mostly boat. The great majority (86%) had visited as a family, couple, or with friends, 7% with a commercial tour group, and just 7% by themselves. Visitors included daytrippers (45%), or stayed 1-3 nights (40%) or longer (15%).

Visitor satisfaction

Two thirds of visitors (69%) rated themselves as 'totally satisfied' with their visit and 28% as 'mostly' satisfied, with the rest (5%) less than sufficiently satisfied. The survey asked, inter alia, what visitors most appreciated about their most recent visit to Waiheke, and what they didn't like about that visit; 83% commented on what they liked most, and despite generally high satisfaction ratings, 42% commented on aspects of their visit that they didn't like. The most common 'likes' and 'dislikes' are presented here.

'Likes'

Across all visitors, the aspects of their visit most valued are shown in **Table 1**. What visitors loved most were the scenery, relaxed atmosphere, friendliness of the people, and the range of outdoor activities, along with the ease of getting out of the city to the island. The island's wine and beaches were also popular features. The data also show that what visitors valued most varied significantly based on whether people were New Zealanders or overseas tourists. In contrast to overseas tourists, NZ visitors were especially appreciative of being able to get away from a city to a semi-rural, island environment with its sense of relaxation and holiday atmosphere, tranquillity, and community friendliness, and to do that easily from Auckland.

¹⁵ While this pattern may be a function of pandemic restrictions in the summer of 2020-2021, these data reflect previous visitor statistics for Waiheke. Note that Asian and daytripper tourists may be somewhat underrepresented in the survey, due to the dissemination medium, which was through Waiheke tourism operator email data bases but did not include Fullers 360°.

Other important aspects for NZ visitors were visiting family and close friends (6%), and being able to get around the island easily (9%, including people who brought their cars to the island). Additional likes mentioned specifically included other aspects of the natural environment (6% NZers, 7% overseas), such as bush-walking and bird life, and the diversity of activities available (5% NZers). It is noteworthy that few respondents commented on arts or cultural activities.

Table 1: What visitors appreciated most about Waiheke		
Likes	NZers %¹⁶	Overseas tourists %
Scenery – the beauty of the island’s natural environment	31	52
Friendliness of the local people	26	37
Outdoor activities available (other than the beaches)	18	26
Relaxed, holiday atmosphere and quietness	20	10
Vineyards and wine	14	24
Beaches and beach activities	12	13
Access – ease of access to Auckland	9	6
Getting away – able to get out of the city	10	8

A trip away somewhere to bring friends together for good wine and a get-away that felt like we had gone out of the country for a weekend to escape the city.

I love how nice the locals are and how everyone seems to know each other. The scenery is also amazing! I love how I'm only a ferry trip away from Auckland but I feel like I'm on holiday somewhere else!

Location been so close to Auckland City - felt I could be anywhere in the world and its in our backyard!

Loved the 'island' feel and the ease of getting around, we all felt like we were on an overseas holiday. We also got to see a pod of Orca swim along Oneroa beach front, that was amazing.

The cleanliness of the Island, the friendly locals, the scenery and the total peacefulness it was brilliant

The wineries are gorgeous and the food are outstanding, local people are super friendly and passionate, the island is magical and it made us feel like we were in another country, easy to get around the island, great weather, so easy and fast to get there from Auckland, lots different types of activities to do.

We are over 80 years old. Waiheke is the only 'overseas' travel we still do. Love the car ferry and the restaurants. We danced at the RSA.

Dislikes¹⁷

Visitors’ most common complaints were around expensiveness of their visit, tourist congestion that detracted from being able to fully enjoy the visit, and experiences related to perceived poor quality of hospitality and other tourist services. **Table 2** shows that people

¹⁶ Respondents commonly identified multiple likes and dislikes. Percentages in Tables 1 and 2 are rounded to the nearest whole number, and represent the percentage of total respondents making comments on the particular theme. Only percentages over 5% are reported here.

¹⁷ Note that references to the weather were removed from the data set.

who had visited Waiheke more often in the past were more disappointed than first-time or less frequent visitors, especially in relation to their experiences of the ferry services.

Table 2: Dislikes and disappointments		
Dislikes	<3 visits %	3+ visits %
Expensive & poor value for money – including transport, food and dining, accommodation, & activities	30	35
Ferry problems, including cost, queues & overcrowding, schedule disruption	8	22
Accommodation poor quality	12	15
Access difficulties around the island	11	10
Bus services – including costs, scheduling, lateness, queues	15	9
Food – including poor quality, lack of choice	13	7
Poor amenities & lack of cleanliness	9	9
Overcrowding & congestion – beaches, cafés, accommodation, traffic, parking	7	9
Hospitality service – rudeness or poor quality	9	3

The main complaint from visitors overall, regardless of whether they had visited previously, was the expense of the ferry and of hospitality services in general; many saw the prices as exorbitant and much greater than for comparable services elsewhere in NZ and overseas. A key complaint from ‘repeat’ visitors was the inflated cost of the passenger ferry, which made it unaffordable to an average family, and the problems associated with ferry congestion and schedule disruption. As a result, families were frequently choosing to bring a car, adding to the traffic congestion on the island. Other disappointments noted by smaller numbers of visitors, especially ‘repeat’ visitors, included some retail and hospitality outlets being closed on weekdays, drunk or rude behaviour by tourists, and the refusal of some people to wear masks on the ferries.

In general, things were expensive. We had been warned before coming so I would say that Waiheke’s reputation is that it's great but expensive. I would imagine many people would be priced out of staying.

Prices, overcrowding. Traffic and too many people.

Beaches were dirty and a bit polluted, public transport wasn't very reliable or friendly for getting around the island. Buses got to packed at end of day, people left behind.

Ferry! Shocking!! Our group was split both ways, and people were left off the Ferry and had to wait for the next one. No communication. Freezing winds, very very disappointing aspect to what was otherwise a fantastic day.

Management of road traffic could be better increase frequency if public transport - eliminate private transport for visitors by providing flexible, safe, affordable friendly public transport.

Missed the 5.00pm ferry along with about 150 others because the boat was too small/full.

Septic overflow to little Oneroa. Disgusting in this day and age that a beach has to be closed due to this.

Ridiculous prices at the wineries and a "we couldn't care less if we served you wines that you didn't like at your tasting, just pay your \$15 and leave" attitude at [vineyard].

Drunken hen/stag parties - rude, littering, bad behaviour.

The exploitation by the super rich and the privatisation of huge swathes of land. The destruction of the blue penguin habitat for luxury yachts.

The people on the ferry were too casual about mask wearing. The queues are too long both ends. Very noisy ferry with filthy fumes coming out of the funnel.

Transport. Taxis are horrific never turn up on time and are expensive. Busses are good value and on time but only service half the island.

Summary

The data demonstrate that the features that visitors valued Waiheke for *most* reflected the opportunity to *not* be in an urban environment – that is, the beauty of the scenery, the friendliness, quiet and laid-back feel, and being able to access all of that easily from Auckland or beyond. These are likewise the aspects of the island for which residents choose to live there, and that they wish to have protected (as discussed in subsequent sections, below).

However, those features of Waiheke are not *intrinsic* to the island, or naturally occurring; maintaining them relies on huge effort by the Waiheke community itself. Ensuring their continuance requires constant and typically unpaid activity by residents, individually and in community groups, for example, to collect rubbish from the beaches, sea and forests, reforest the native bush, provide clean-up and ‘zero waste’ management for large tourist events, maintain fragile septic systems, conserve water, provide affordable accommodation to tourism workers, and rehabilitate native wildlife, as well as providing time-consuming and skilled governance support for the many Waiheke organisations that provide this essential infrastructure work. While Council funds some essential services, such as weekly collection of rubbish and recycling, some other waste management and maintenance of public amenities, much of the labour to maintain, protect and restore the natural environment, and arguably all of the ‘friendliness’, is provided by locals in their role as kaitiaki.

Likewise, the aspects that detracted from visitor satisfaction, aside from expensiveness, related primarily to overcrowding – on the ferries, buses, roads, parking, beaches, food outlets, and other public amenities – and/or reflected their disappointment either with visitor services or difficulty in accessing some parts of the island. Several visitors noted that these problems collectively could be solved at least partly by prohibiting visitor vehicles and providing a frequent, low-cost shuttle-bus service servicing multiple locations around the island, or by a better bus service generally.

D. Experiences and perspectives of Waiheke residents – Overview of research findings

People come to Waiheke to experience our unique lifestyle and the beauty of the island, but in allowing unfettered tourism we are basically killing the golden goose. Locals need to have more say in how many visitors we think is beneficial for the island - we need to be involved in the conversation much more than we have been up to now. We should be following the tenets of 'Essentially Waiheke', which is a document created by Waihekians for Waiheke. We live here; we are not a 'destination' to be milked by AT and AC. This is our home!

Waiheke is a community, not a commodity.

This section integrates material from the following research sources:

- The 2021 survey of Waiheke residents' experiences and perspectives
- 2021 interviews with providers of essential services on Waiheke
- The social media analysis undertaken from December 2020-May 2021
- The 2020 survey of Waiheke residents' views by the University of Auckland School of Environment and *Project Forever Waiheke*
- Information from mass media reporting.

The main focus of the discussion here is on the findings from the 2021 research; 2020 data are identified specifically where included.

Respondents' characteristics

In total 294 residents responded to the survey.¹⁸ The majority (84%) were permanent or semi-permanent residents, 10% regular weekend or holiday residents, and 6% classified themselves as 'occasional' residents or those on visitor or worker visas. One third (32%) had lived on Waiheke more than 20 years, a quarter (25%) 11-20 years, 20% for 6-10 years, and 23% for less than 5 years. The majority (70%) were owner-occupiers, 11% regular weekend owner-occupiers, and 18% were tenants.

Collectively they represented all residential areas of Waiheke in approximate proportion to its population density, with 25% in the Oneroa area, 15% in Blackpool/Surfdale, 16% in Ostend, 37% in Palm Beach and Onetangi, 5% in Omiha/Rocky Bay, and the remainder in the rural areas.

Level of engagement in tourism services

Almost half of (43%) of all respondents had some engagement in providing tourism or hospitality services - 30% being business owner/operators or otherwise employed full-time in the sector, and 13% employed part-time. People who had lived on Waiheke for less than 5 years were significantly more likely to be engaged in providing tourism services than those who had lived on the island longer. Tenants were proportionally more likely than owner-occupiers to be engaged in the tourism sector on the island, including renting out part of

¹⁸ Non-resident respondents were screened out.

their home. A quarter of residents (24%) had rented out their home to tourists regularly or occasionally, 15% “rarely” and 61% never.

Benefits of tourism to residents

Respondents were asked to identify ways in which they had benefited from tourism in 2015-2019 (that is, prior to the pandemic impacts). The potential benefits of tourism in the survey question were adapted from the [UN WTO tourism benefits parameters](#), and also offered respondents an option to describe other perceived benefits. **Table 3** sets out residents’ reported experience of tourism benefits.

Type of benefit	% of all residents	% of those engaged in tourism	% not engaged in tourism
Better recreational opportunities	48	53	44
Improved availability of products and services on the island	38	43	35
Increased personal or household income from a tourism-related business	29	56	8
Improvements to the island’s infrastructure	25	31	19
Improved standard of living due to tourism opportunities	17	28	9
Something else	8	8	7
No benefit at all	29	13	42

Summary of perceived benefits to residents

- Fewer than half of respondents identified benefits to them from tourism on each of the parameters surveyed. For all types of benefit, reported benefits were significantly greater for people engaged in providing tourism services.
- Almost half (42%) of people not engaged in providing tourism services, and 7% of those who were engaged in tourism, perceived zero benefits of Waiheke tourism for them personally.
- Fewer than one third overall identified an income benefit, and only 8% of people not engaged in tourism services. While the level of income benefit was not surveyed, [hospitality and transport services are recognised as a low-wage economy](#).
- Benefits related to improved standard of living were highly correlated with having an income benefit from tourism (e.g. obtaining hospitality work on the island that avoided the costs and other downsides of a commute to Auckland for work).
- The benefits identified most commonly by residents (25%-48%) were better entertainment options, improvements to infrastructure, and improved availability of some services and products. Improved services and products mentioned specifically in residents’ open comments mostly reflected increased eating-out options, computer services and “residential rent income”. Infrastructure improvements identified related mostly to improved sealing of Waiheke roads.
- Longer-term residents (>10 years) were more than twice as likely (38%) than newer residents (18%) to identify no benefits of increasing tourism to them.

- ‘Other’ benefits of tourism identified were not necessarily a reflection of increases in tourism. Most of these comments related to a cosmopolitan feel, having enjoyable experiences with compatible homestay visitors, or to increased income from homestay rental, or indicated no perceived benefit at all from tourism.

Open minded exposure to people with global not just insular perspectives - they take our blinkers off!

Improved employment opportunities for our business, improved revenue allowing job security for our employees, improved collaboration with other businesses.

makes it viable to have only one of our family commuting - otherwise we would both need to commute

Income from rental of holiday home to visitors

have not benefited

Tourists are a total DIS-benefit.

In summary, these data demonstrate clearly that the economic benefits of tourism do not trickle down to most members of the residential community at large. Other apparent benefits attributed to increases in tourism may arguably be a function of other changes, such as services arising from more residents working from home or in jobs on Waiheke following COVID-related ‘pivots’ in employment type or style.

Negative impacts of overtourism

Table 4 sets out reported negative impacts of tourism perceived by residents in 2020-2021; *note that* in that summer/autumn post-lockdown period, Waiheke is believed to have received fewer visitors than annually from 2015 to 2019.

Table 4: Negative impacts of tourism in summer/autumn 2020-2021			
Impact	% of all residents	% of those engaged in tourism	% not engaged in tourism
Ferry congestion and/or delays	87	81	92
Road congestion	57	41	69
Problems with access to public amenities and services	51	41	58
Issues around damage, risk or pollution to public or private spaces	50	43	56
Lack of access to affordable accommodation	34	43	27
Damage to the island’s wildlife and habitats	33	32	34
Feeling COVID-unsafe on the passenger ferries	30	22	36
Other	11	12	20
None of the above	8	12	5

Summary of negative tourism impacts

- The vast majority of residents (92%) identified negative impacts attributed to tourism in their recent personal experience. All negative impacts were more common among

residents not engaged in tourism, except for access to accommodation (and ‘other’ impacts).

- Most identified multiple negative impacts of overtourism on going about their daily lives.
- The negative tourism impacts identified most commonly related to the ferry services (87% of respondents), road congestion (47%), pollution and other damage to the natural or built environment, both public or private spaces (50%), and problems with access to island amenities and services (51%). One third of residents had identified damage to Waiheke wildlife (33%).
- A dismaying 34% had experienced difficulties finding affordable accommodation. The interviews revealed that this number included, variously: many very long-term residents, including many elders and people with mental health or disability issues; people who owned and operated successful well-established Waiheke businesses; medium-low income families with secure long-term employment on Waiheke; many people employed in tourism-related services.
- Feeling COVID-unsafe on the passenger ferries (30%) related mainly to the refusal of passengers, perceived as primarily tourists, to wear face masks. This issue continues to be widely raised in Waiheke’s various social media sites. It is a particular concern because the passenger ferry is the only way for sick and immune-compromised island residents to access essential medical appointments in Auckland, and Fullers 360° does not have a legal authority or obligation to enforce mask-wearing on board.¹⁹
- The ‘other’ impacts identified by residents (n=32) related commonly to: unsafe driving, in particular SUVs, Fullers double-deckers and other tour buses; abusive behaviour from tourists towards residents; noise pollution, from helicopters and parties; uncontrolled visitors’ dogs; increased air pollution from vehicle emissions; freedom camping; and a loss of community spirit.
- People who had lived on Waiheke for more than 10 years were significantly more likely than more recent arrivals to identify negative impacts related to the natural environment, other damage and pollution, feeling COVID-unsafe on the ferries, and access to public amenities. This effect may be due to the greater likelihood of longer-term residents being involved in community and voluntary work on Waiheke.

A majority of these issues reflect those identified in the 2018 and 2020 Auckland Council surveys of issues for Waiheke residents.

Desired tourist numbers

Significant variance was apparent in what residents saw as ideal visitor volumes, based on how long they had lived on Waiheke, and whether they were or weren’t engaged in tourism services and benefited economically from tourism.

Unlimited tourist numbers were supported by only 29% of all residents, and only 16% of residents not engaged in tourism business. Visitor numbers prior to 2020 were seen as “too many” by 40% of all residents - half (52%) of residents not engaged in tourism business, twice as many as the 24% of those engaged in tourism; 38% viewed pre-2020 numbers as

¹⁹ It has also been noted on Waiheke social media that some ferry staff who have very close contact with passengers at disembarkation remain employed in those roles despite having been exempted from wearing a mask on medical grounds.

“about the right number”, and only a very small minority (13%) thought the island could accommodate more than pre-pandemic volumes.

Were tourist numbers before 2020?	All residents %	Engaged in tourism %	Resident < 10 years %	Not engaged in tourism %	Resident > 10 years %
Too many	40	24	19	52	54
About the right number	38	44	48	34	29
Not enough	13	22	16	7	12
Don't know/ no opinion	9	10	16 ²⁰	7	6
What visitor numbers do you want?	All residents %	Engaged in tourism %	Resident < 10 years %	Not engaged in tourism %	Resident > 10 years %
No limits on visitor numbers	29	46	42	16	21
Same or fewer visitors than in 2019	38	26	22	53	48
Something else	22	17	18	20	25
Don't know / no opinion	11	11	18	11	6

Apart from a minority of residents who voiced a wish for tourism to “collapse” or “never come back at all”, a majority of respondents saw a place for tourism on Waiheke, and a wish that the island’s beauty and unique character be shared with visitors. However many distinguished between the visitors whom Waiheke locals have always welcomed – family, friends, repeat visitors from Auckland and beyond who genuinely love and appreciate Waiheke’s natural taonga, and the many volunteers who come over to support planting days in the bush reserves and other community events – and “tourists getting drunk at wineries and treating our Island like party central”.

Controlled visitor numbers dependant on infrastructure and ferry capacities

More family and longer term visitors and mid-week visitors encouraged. We could do with a lot less people coming to the island to use it as their personal brewery and toilet every saturday.

I would like to see more overnight visitors. I feel the day-trip visitor benefit the ferry company, but benefits do not necessarily translate to the community on the island.

Less seasonality with more products, services, events through the year to help mitigate effects of low season.

People engaged in tourism expressed a preference for priority to longer-stay visitors, family and friends, controls on daily visitor arrivals, and a better tourist spread outside of summer. People not engaged in tourism mostly voiced a wish for a cap on visitor numbers, eco-tourists, or tourist numbers based on the carrying capacity of Waiheke infrastructure. Many

²⁰ Note that this figure was 37% for people living on Waiheke for less than 2 years.

respondents commented that visitor caps had been implemented effectively in islands and other vulnerable, high-volume destinations overseas as the best way to avoid congestion of all kinds, irreparable damage to natural environments, and further loss of ‘social licence’, and to support the right of residents to ‘quiet enjoyment’ of their home.

Fewer visitors, and the kind of visitors who are interested in what is going on here with alternative lifestyles and an interest in the environment; not just trying to distract themselves on a double decker bus.

A different type of tourism - no cruise ship crowds. Quality tourism, not quantity tourism. Visitors rather than tourists and gawkers.

A sustainable level where Waiheke is a high quality destination, not perceived as overrun with expensive low quality offering

Limits to numbers coming to Waiheke via Fullers - like they do for Tiritiri Matangi for example.

Sustainable practices. Based on infrastructure to accommodate them. Limit to numbers staying in holiday accommodation e.g. not 10 pax in a 3 bed house.

There needs to be an assessment of the impact, increased numbers means more restaurants, but beaches become crowded.

A common theme in residents’ open comments was that priority should be given to particular groups, based on NZ cultural values; that is, the family and friends of residents should be entitled to visit them, as would happen in any other community. Similarly, it was acknowledged that New Zealanders, and in particular Aucklanders, should have some priority right (over overseas citizens) to visit Waiheke, which has been a much valued ‘getaway’ from the city for decades. However, even those visitors were only welcome if they in turn valued and respected the right of locals to have access to their own community services and resources.

Priority actions to manage future Waiheke tourism

Survey respondents were asked to suggest (open comments) “what action/s [they] would like to see happen to manage future tourism on Waiheke and its impacts on the island”, and finally to make any “other comments” they wished about future tourism on Waiheke. **Table 6** sets out the most common actions wanted. (Note that while some of these percentages may appear low, respondents were permitted only 30-word replies, so chose topics that mattered most to them.)

Table 6: Actions for tourism impacts management	
Residents’ priority action areas	% of respondents²¹
Fullers 360° ferry improvements – government regulation, schedule, affordability for residents, service reliability & quality	31
Cap daily tourist/visitor numbers; visitor permits required	16
Infrastructure improvements generally	13

²¹ Many respondents made multiple suggestions, so total responses exceed 100%.

Table 6: Actions for tourism impacts management	
Traffic congestion control – limits on non-resident vehicles; more speed controls; prioritise roadside walkers; more policing of summer traffic	11
Protect/prioritise the community/resident access/use of island services, resources and amenities (e.g. water supply, accommodation, beach access)	10
Address/prioritise resident accommodation needs, including tourism workers	10
Tourism focus on eco-tourism, low-impact tourism, voluntourism	10
No double decker buses, or large tourist buses	10
Ferry priority guaranteed to Waiheke locals	9
Protect Waiheke uniqueness/special character/quirkiness/eccentricity, etc Promote island selectively as ‘sanctuary’ etc	9
Better protection of local environment – close off or require non-resident access permits for forests, beaches, walking tracks	9

The data were compared across respondents who did, and did not, have an engagement in providing tourism services. Comments from respondents who were engaged in providing tourism-related services were more likely than others to place an emphasis on: accommodation for workers; improved ferry services; infrastructure improvements generally; targeting high value visitors/long-stay visitors; better information and education for tourists, and greater Local Board control over decision-making for Waiheke.

In contrast, residents not engaged in the tourism sector placed greater emphasis on the following: prioritising the basic needs of the community/locals/residents over tourists, for access to passenger ferry services and potable water supply in particular; capping daily visitor numbers, together with a visitor levy to pay for infrastructure costs of tourism; orienting tourism to eco-tourism, low impacts tourism, voluntourism; limiting non-resident vehicles, more speed controls and priority walker access; a government-regulated bus service, with small shuttles, scheduled for locals, and prohibiting double decker and large tourist-only buses; protecting Waiheke’s ‘special character’, and developing Waiheke as an environmental ‘sanctuary’.

Further kinds of action, each proposed by 5%-6% of respondents, were:

- Stricter regulations on tour number limits, tour operator licensing, and transport types
- High value visitors/long-stay visitors
- More policing by the NZ Police – traffic, masks on ferries, bad visitor behaviour, littering on beaches, environmental destruction, noise control
- Waste management improvements – litter, septic monitoring to avoid overuse and environmental damage, restaurant waste reduction and management
- Better amenities – toilets, seating, parking
- A visitor levy to pay for tourism impacts on infrastructure
- Better tourist information and education.

Achieving the balance – role of community cohesion

In 'other comments' made by residents (n=157), the same key themes as above were repeated. However greater emphasis was placed on prioritising residents' needs before tourism, limiting visitor numbers to achieve that goal, focusing on eco-tourism and tourism products that educate and attract visitors who share Waiheke values, managing Waiheke as a 'sanctuary', to be treasured and protected, and finding a 'balance'.

This latter theme was an evident 'subtext' in many respondents' comments – that is, the need for a balance, for strong management of tourist access, so that locals' reasonable needs were met, and visitors were then more likely to receive the kind of service and friendliness that is characteristic of the island. An equally evident implicit theme, apparent in the phrasing of residents' comments generally, was the passion and urgency with which residents expressed their kaitiaki role for Waiheke, their sadness, dismay and apparent anger at how tourism had degraded Waiheke environments already, and the need to "protect" the island from further damage. People interviewed for this research commonly emphasised the essential role played by Waiheke locals in sustaining the island's natural environments, and the importance of community cohesion in facilitating that role.

All of these themes are described and discussed in detail below - **Section E. Essential factors in planning for Waiheke sustainable community and tourism.**

E. Essential factors in planning for Waiheke regenerative tourism and community

The issues identified by all stakeholders provide a clear set of parameters to guide planning for Waiheke's future wellbeing, not just for tourism management, but for holistic regenerative sustainability – environmentally, economically, socially, culturally, and spiritually.

Placing community and environmental wellbeing before income from tourism

- *Kaitiakitanga, protecting Waiheke* – community/social, natural and built environments, and 'special character'
- *Emotional/spiritual response* – sadness, frustration and outrage at the loss of community cohesion and damage to natural environments
- *Prioritising resident supply needs* – water security, transport, accommodation, health services, emergency services
- *Ferry service* – government regulation, and prioritising residents' essential access to Auckland and mainland
- *Accommodation for low-medium income and long-term residents* – families and other workers

Implementing tourism management for sustainability and regeneration

- *Tourism planning* – long-term whole-of-community planning, for community and environmental regeneration; determining an evidence-based carrying capacity
- *Restrictions on visitor arrival numbers*
- *Priority focus on low-impact & regenerative tourism*
- *Waste management* – targeting zero visitor waste
- *Addressing traffic congestion and road safety*
- *Improved public amenities*
- *Controlling for objectionable visitor behaviour* – in particular drunkenness, excessive noise levels, littering, and other environmental damage.

Each of the themes above representing residents' concerns and wishes are described in the following sections. Discussion of each theme is based on the collated data from all research components, including interviews with management of Waiheke's essential services, and supported by quotes that (i) are typical and representative of comments relating to that theme, and (ii) provide feasible ideas for tourism development. Note that quotes have been taken equally from residents who are engaged in the tourism sector and those who are not.

Themes are discussed in two categories:

- I. Placing community and environmental wellbeing before tourism development**
- II. Implementing tourism management for community and environmental sustainability and regeneration, and tourism sector sustainability**

I. Placing community and environmental wellbeing before tourism development

Key factor – The Waiheke economy may benefit from tourism, but does not ‘rely’ on it.

Key finding – Fewer than one third of Waiheke residents benefited economically from tourism pre-2020, and less than 10% of those not engaged in tourism services; in contrast, more than 90% of all respondent reported being adversely affected by pre-2020 tourism in terms of equitable access to essential community resources and services.

Key tenet – The Waiheke community are the kaitiaki of the island’s environments, and therefore of its continuing value to visitors; without the community’s care for and labour on the island, the features that attract visitors, and that are the reasons why people choose to live on Waiheke, would become rapidly degraded.

Kaitiakitanga, protecting Waiheke – community/social, natural and built environments, and its ‘special character’

The need to protect Waiheke from the negative impacts of both tourism and other forms of development was either explicit or implicit in a majority of the comments made by respondents, both those engaged in the tourism sector and those who are not. This finding reflects the results of previous studies, including research undertaken for Auckland Council; the [Essentially Waiheke: Refresh 2016](#) report called for mitigation of the risks of increasing environmental damage from tourism, as did [Allpress et al’s](#) study for Auckland Council in 2018. The same issues were identified in the [community consultation](#) undertaken and reported by *Project Forever Waiheke* in 2018.

The 2020 University of Auckland/*Project Forever Waiheke* survey of Waiheke residents found that Waiheke Islanders had experienced the COVID-19 lockdowns as a revelation of (i) how much more accessible and enjoyable the island’s natural and community assets were without tourists, (ii) how much residents’ motives for living on Waiheke were reinforced as a result, and (iii) how apparent it became to residents that the intrinsic qualities of both the island’s community and the natural environment needed to be better protected in future.

Better protections for the island’s wildlife – fauna and flora – have been a concern for many decades, with several community conservation groups becoming established in the past 20 years to take on the work needed for restoration of forests, seas and bird life in particular. Damage caused by increasing tourism has ranged from deliberate destruction by Auckland Council in 2017 of up to 2,000 native trees and protected native gecko populations in the road reserves to make ‘safe carriageway’ for [double decker buses](#), to increasing numbers of native bird injuries in the summer period – kaka, korora (little blue penguins) and kereru in particular – identified as directly attributable to visitors’ dogs being uncontrolled or visitors driving on protected wildlife areas on beaches.

Key points made were as follows:

- While acknowledging the status of mana whenua on Te Motu-arai-roa, respondents identified the residents collectively as the kaitiaki of Waiheke’s natural and community environments.
- A majority of Waiheke’s longest-serving and most effective kaitiaki volunteer workforce are people with low-medium incomes; however, the ability of many to remain living on

the island is threatened by lack of affordable accommodation, and many long-term residents who supported community and environmental sustainability work have been forced off the island by economic factors.

- The main areas where respondents saw greater protections being needed were in relation to:
 - The natural environment – key concerns were for tourism impacts on beaches, forests, and the marine environment
 - Overuse, overcrowding and congestion impacts resulting from tourism in relation to all features of the island’s social, natural and built environments - housing, road use, beach use, parking, septic and other waste disposal, water supply, resident access to Auckland, and use of all other services and amenities essential to a rural community, including health and emergency services, shopping for essentials.

Key imperatives to protect the essential character of Waiheke were identified as the following:

- Urgent development of regulation and policy to manage current overtourism impacts²²
- Regulate the ferry services to limit daily visitor access, especially Friday-Sunday, public holiday weekends, and during NZ school holiday periods

Other recommendations made repeatedly by Waiheke environmental and neighbourhood protection groups to enable regulated protection of Waiheke environments have included:

- Establishing a Hauraki Gulf marine reserve
- Establishing a UN Biosphere Reserve on Waiheke
- Declining marina developments in bays that are home to protected wildlife
- Limiting licensing for helicopter pads.

STOP CHANGING WAIHEKE to suit more visitors. stop promoting it. restrict tours. foster appreciation for natural environment. locals' needs before visitors'. no mass tourism. protect Waiheke as World Heritage Site.

I like the vision of the island as a regenerated environmental haven/sanctuary/jewel in the middle of the gulf... and the resulting change the to nature and number of visitors attracted.

We should encourage visitors who share our values (broadly as expressed in 'Essentially Waiheke') and discourage 'tourism' that seeks to exploit our island for the profit of non-residents.

Waiheke's slow pace character and laid back & caring community are at risk of being displaced by greed, hightech and consumerism. convenience & money driven businesses like jetski hire and marinas are leading to environmental degradation and should be banned.

We need to share this wonderful place, but protect it from over use and ruin it with too many visitors.

We have to preserve and be guardians of the precious resources and landscapes we have for all to enjoy now and especially for the future generations.

²² Effective regulation in jurisdictions overseas are listed comprehensively in Appendix 1.

Absolutely essential to keep Waiheke's uniqueness and look after our environment

It's a pity to stop everyone walking in the reserves, but we had to close them [kauri dieback prevention]. We might not have done that if there weren't as many tourists, or it was only New Zealanders. *Waiheke conservation personnel*

Emotional and spiritual response to impacts of increased tourism

Respondents comments commonly reflected complex emotional responses, including a mix of frustration, annoyance, anger, sadness, and the passion with which they love and care for the island. These feelings, expressed in the phrasing of comments, reflected their heartfelt desire to protect the island, not only as their home, but for the essential value of the island's intrinsic qualities.

This survey will change nothing. Money wins out every time. Next Summer the Motu will be whored out once again.

The tourism 'industry' here is a disgrace. It's badly run and has been poorly planned. I would welcome its complete collapse.

I just think it is interesting that when we think of lifestyle we think of money... \$ does NOT bring happiness, just options for pleasant distraction once our basic needs are met.

Waiheke is charming and tourists love it. We do not want to change it or modernise it too much, so that it keeps its hippie types and individual creative people which give it character.

Can we please have another pandemic [lockdown].

We're a community, not a commodity.

I cannot imagine any way in which the horror of what's happening to our island can be mitigated. I feel entirely powerless in the face of it.

local operators need to stop pushing tourism as the "holy grail", insisting govt should bail them out or throw out rules which impact on their "cheap" labour market

Prioritising residents' basic needs and rights

A repeated theme in residents' responses was that island residents should have a prior entitlement to access essential services and resources, both as a community right, and because of the island's isolation from alternatives on the mainland. Many residents highlighted problems with the lack of council regulation of essential services on the grounds that they are 'commercial' operations. A range of NZ laws provide for the rights of citizens to essential resources like reasonable access to public places and safe shelter, but Waiheke resident access to some essential resources is obstructed when tourism volumes are excessive.

Resources and services that residents wanted to see regulated urgently for resident priority over tourism demands were ferry transport, water supply, and housing. However, noise control and the right to a quiet neighbourhood was also a common theme. There is an evident irony in the appreciation by visitors of the island's tranquillity, when this feature is denied to locals due to tourism volumes. A right to 'quiet enjoyment' of one's home is [entrenched in New Zealand's tenancy laws](#), and is equally a right of people living near holiday rental accommodations.

I derive NO benefit from tourism. I live here and pay taxes and rates here. Tourists don't. A few industries and individuals benefit the rest suffer. Try catching a ferry in the weekends.

We pay rates but tourists don't. Fullers/Sealink shld include a levy to manage rubbish, drinking water and toilets. Need residents lane on ferry open every crossing.

Why is the water going to drunk tourists at vineyards before families?!?!

Residents MUST continue to have ferry priority.

More public toilets, more public education around good behavior with our beaches & walks. No marina at KP & have a marine reserve. Ferry prices for residents should be lower.

The residents of Waiheke live here because it is beautiful and quiet. We don't want to get more visitors than we can safely manage.

Big events on island should have to charter own ferries so locals can always get on a timetabled ferry.

Too many holiday makers and Air Bnbs making a large profit, whilst long term locals and families are left with limited rental options.

The island can not cope now residents are treated like crap by Council and Fullers.

Ferry service

Addressing the evident stress of tourism on essential ferry access for residents reflects previous research and ongoing community action on this issue,²³ and remains a chronic and unresolved problem. Key messages from residents' data were as follows:

- Residents need a reliable, sufficient, resident-centred ferry schedule
- Fullers operation – schedule, prices, access, and reliability – need to *prioritise residents'* needs; approximately 1200-1500²⁴ Waihekeans commute to work or school Monday-Friday, and others rely on Fullers 360 service for essential medical care.
- The residents' lane needs to be available for *all* sailings, not based on Fullers' assessment of whether it is warranted; residents need to have *priority* boarding at peak commuter times, not concurrent boarding.
- The only way that a reliable service can be provided for residents is if Waiheke ferry services are fully government-regulated. Regulation, and genuine ferry service competition, are both fully supported by Auckland Transport and the Waiheke Local Board.
- Current ferry prices for island residents are excessive; lower multi-pass ferry fees (i.e. for residents and repeat visitors) are urgently needed.
- A system is needed to make priority access for residents both simple and easy for ferry staff to implement. Effective software has been developed in other countries for this purpose.
- Security on all passenger sailings is essential for the safety of residents, to ensure COVID masking compliance and to prevent tourists aggressive conduct towards residents.

²³ See the recent [PTOM Review Survey](#) and repeated community actions, including [petitions](#) and [public meetings](#).

²⁴ Data provided by Auckland Unlimited, July 2021.

Fullers rein themselves in and become community transport providers vs milking everyone with their monopolistic standing.

Residents should be given priority when boarding. Resident queue [currently] is activated only at certain times, with a very short lead in.

A competitive ferry service. Buying 40 tickets that have a longer life than 1 year.

A second ferry service to be ENCOURAGED and supported by Auckland Council / AT; not bullied to death like Explore was.

Better management of high season demand by Fullers (not just increasing fares!).

Sort Fullers out. Pricing too high and service terrible - not the staff, the organisation.

Separate commuter and tourist ferries. Limits to daily tourist numbers.

Fullers should be made to provide a more frequent timetable over peak tourist times. Leaving commuters, other travelers and tourists behind at any time is completely unacceptable.

Accommodation crisis

These recent media headlines highlight that this issue is a major crisis for many long-term island families and other residents.

- [*Trouble in paradise: Waiheke's housing crisis leaving renters in the lurch*](#) (December 2020)
- [*Waiheke Islanders pushed out as property asking prices increase 71pc in a year*](#) (July 2021)
- [*Waiheke Island rental listings fall 47 per cent as Airbnb adds to housing shortage*](#) (July 2021)
- [*Thirteen houses in nine years: Waiheke Island man documents rental crisis*](#) (August 2021)

The purchase of Waiheke homes by “[cached-up Kiwi returnees](#)” has resulted in reducing rental stock in an already stressed accommodation dearth for Waiheke families and workers, as the new owners convert their purchases to Airbnb rental, at least short-term. However, the problem is not recent; for more than 5 years the Waiheke workforce has been supported by ‘reverse commuters’ who come to the island daily for work from as far away as South Auckland, because they cannot afford local rentals. Waiheke workforce problems are likely to exacerbate as NZ experiences lowering unemployment. Owners of some long-established Waiheke businesses have struggled to find secure long-term rental accommodation for themselves, let alone their employees. Personnel in the Waiheke budgeting service have repeatedly pointed out that they are [no longer providing budgeting services as such](#); people simply can’t afford food *and* a home, due to rental costs. The Waiheke Resources Trust set up a [community pantry and fridge with free access](#) to food supply in 2020, and commented that the supply provided every day from food rescue is all taken by noon.

The NZ Human Rights Commission recently raised the issue of housing access, initiating an inquiry based [on government failure to ensure sufficient housing](#); however Waiheke has more than enough housing stock to accommodate the permanent resident population.

Solutions proposed by interviewees and survey respondents alike focused primarily on introducing government regulations in the following areas; all of these interventions have occurred in other jurisdictions to address overtourism (see **Appendix 1**):

- Cap visitor accommodation permits
- Change District Plan to allow visitor accommodation homes to be used residentially
- Licensing of Airbnb and other holiday rentals, to limit holiday rental numbers
- Requirement that tourism employers provide worker accommodation
- Licensing to encourage provision of more hostel accommodation.

You can't separate out the impacts of development from tourism now, because so much accommodation is being built or converted for holiday accommodation. We used to just get backpackers; now we're home for long-term Waihekeans. *Budget accommodation provider*

Tourism should not result in locals having nowhere to live.

More hostel accommodation to cater for seasonal workers.

On my road (Ostend) alone this year I had 10-12 vans with people living in them. It's Winter now and at least 6 of them are still here. These people work on the island they have a right to live in a home too. It's not right.

Affordable housing for hospitality workers and older residents. Small housing projects

AirB&B [should be] taxed out of business.

More lower cost accommodation needs to be made available for long-term residents and workers on the island. Only promote events and places the infrastructure and environment can sustain.

I find the AirBnb trend alarming. Rental accommodation repurposed for high returns undermines the community. The building of luxury second homes is at the cost of the ongoing needs of services of permanent residents.

We are not seeing many of these sold properties remaining as rentals. In general they are becoming owner occupied as Waiheke becomes an even more desirable place to live with the increase in working from home options ... and we are witnessing a great deal of anxiety amongst long term locals needing to find a new home. *Rental accommodation agency*

Water supply

Summer water supply is a chronic problem, and is likely to get worse based on [climate change predictions for the North Island](#). During a severe [water supply crisis in 2017-2018](#), the Local Board resorted to recommending to families with no access to resupply within the next month that they take their children to the free public showers on the island's beaches for their pre-bed shower. In 2020 [Council established an emergency summer drinking water supply](#) for residents bringing their own containers of up to 20 litres only. Currently the licensed water suppliers have no regulation to refer to when determining whether a resident family or a business should be prioritised for water delivery during Waiheke's normal summer droughts. The majority of the companies have implemented online booking systems, as an attempt at 'first-in-first-served' approach to fair and equitable distribution. However they acknowledged that a low-income family will delay booking a delivery, for economic reasons, whereas businesses will make regular advance bookings, resulting in up

to a 3-month wait when residents try to book. One supplier acknowledged that they give priority at all times to hospitality businesses who have contracts guaranteeing that priority; others gave priority to 'loyal' residents.

Recommendations for management of water supply included:

- Regulation of commercial water supply to give equitable priority to domestic residential customers over tourism businesses
- Compulsory education for hospitality workers in water conservation
- Mandatory water 'governers' on all taps in holiday rental accommodations.

Health services

Health services are stretched by summer tourism in particular, in part because of the sheer additional volume of people on the island, but also because tourists are inclined to take 'fun' risks, consume more alcohol than usual, and undertake activities that are novel to them, resulting in injuries, accidents, and exacerbation of existing medical conditions during their visit. In addition, high volume of calls on health and emergency services coincides with the time when the providers (doctors, nurses, ambulance staff, physiotherapists) want to enjoy their summer and have reasonable time off with family. Staff commonly forgo those summer breaks out of loyalty to their co-workers or to the community at large. Locums and temps, even if they are available, are not as effective as regular staff due to their lack of local knowledge. Bringing in additional staff is not feasible due to the capacity limits on clinic and other facilities, and because additional funding for summer volumes is not always based on the actual volumes, since they cannot be reliably estimated.

We get two kinds of patients who are here on holiday – people who've strained something because they did something stupid while they were drunk or overexcited or doing some new [outdoor] activity, and people who've got a chronic condition and think that being on holiday is the perfect time to get it attended to finally. We don't accept those [latter] ones any more; just keeping up with all the accidents takes all of our time. *Physiotherapist*

Some of our own patients coming in for regular appointments have had to rebook because we having to deal with an emergency. As high as 50% of the people seen [daily patients during peak tourist season] are visitors. *Clinic staff*

We [health provider] do get some extra funding over summer, but it doesn't come anywhere near to covering the increased [patient] volumes. It's a no-brainer – treble the population, give half of them alcohol, let them loose on e-bikes, and you'll get a massive spike. *Waiheke health practitioner*

Emergency services

All emergency services reported being stretched and/or stressed by tourism volumes over peak periods, from the supermarket to health and ambulance services. For example, St John ambulance callout data for Waiheke over 2015-2020 showed typical increases of up to 100% between winter and summer, with rapid spikes in January-February periods.

Ambulances are commonly delayed by tourists' cars and tour buses travelling slowly and ignoring ambulance signals, and in delivering patients for urgent ferry transport to hospitals

in Auckland. Due to priority protocols, ambulance response to medical callouts, such as a fall by a frail island resident, are also delayed if they have to attend urgently to an avoidable accident by a tourist resulting in a potential head injury, such as falls on Waiheke's rocky shoreline, or incompetent use of a rental scooter or e-bike.

Many of the services are staffed largely by volunteers, who also wish to enjoy the summer period while their partners and children are available for a family holiday. This can result in the Waiheke fire service volunteers having to pick up ambulance roles, which they have little or no training for, when locums are not available from Auckland over summer.

They [tourist traffic] just take no notice of us... We can miss the ferry because of that, and then you've got a sick patient waiting around on a gurney in the public terminal for an hour till the next ferry arrives – it's not on. *Ambulance staff*

New Zealand visitors are pretty aware of fire risks generally. The main problem is alcohol and fireworks – they [tourists] have no idea how dry the island gets, and how fast a whole valley could go up in flames with all of the houses in it. Even one local nearly caused that a couple of years back with a careless blowtorch. It's terrifying. *Volunteer firefighter*

Similarly, the big [buy-up of recreational boats in 2020-2021](#), as NZers were unable to travel overseas, has placed a huge additional load on Waiheke's volunteer coastguard services, due to the ignorance of many new boat owners of basic safety measures for boating; the result has been greater coastguard callout volumes than in prior recent years.

Achieving a balance; 'sharing' the island

Many residents acknowledged that Waiheke has always been a favourite and loved getaway for their family and friends, and for Aucklanders, and that that access should continue. Many also recognised the benefits that some aspects of tourism have brought to the community, and the genuine care for the island of Waiheke-based tourism providers. Likewise, respondents who have made a major financial investment in tourism products on Waiheke, and businesses established by people who were already long-term residents, wanted acknowledgement of their continuing investment in the Waiheke economy, their wish to continue making an income in that way, and the value of their economic and other contributions to the island. A common theme in actions proposed by respondents who are engaged in tourism services (see quotes here) was that tourism is "essential" to the island's future economic wellbeing, "here to stay", and that the goal is to achieve a "balance".

Quit whining about overloading and invest in infrastructure. Remove barriers to investment and development.

We need more tourism, not less. The more the better.

Acknowledging the positive contribution that the sector makes to this community would be a more balanced korero

It's a wonderful place. Let's be kind and share it.

Tourism is crucial to Waiheke, but currently there is not the infrastructure necessary to support its expansion.

Tourism is the lifeblood of the community and directly or indirectly provides most employment on the island, thus underpinning the entire Waiheke economy.

Tourism and hospitality supports on-island employment for locals and students and encourages education in horticulture, viticulture, sustainability, environmentalism, and culture by hosting different nationalities on our beautiful island.

Tourism is good for many people. But need to make the island affordable for the ordinary people who live on the island and maintain the income for businesses when tourists aren't around.

Tourism is here to stay. We must all understand that it has a symbiotic relationship to all aspects of the island. Without tourism the only business left will be Countdown and Real Estate agents.

The survey of Waiheke tourism sector businesses (see **Appendix 3** for detailed findings) showed, in summary, that:

- Pandemic restrictions had major impacts on the incomes of the majority of tourism-related services in 2020
- Local tourism businesses have been resilient and highly creative in their response to pandemic restrictions and the downturn in tourist numbers
- Businesses have focused on both short-term and longer-term business sustainability in their planning, including sustaining employment for workers to the extent viable
- Some businesses had diversified the nature and focus of the business, to reduce reliance on tourism
- The local sector body, Waiheke Island Tourism Inc (WITI), has provided valuable support to businesses towards business sustainability
- In March-July 2021, positive business confidence was around 50%, and was highest amongst wine and accommodation businesses, longer-established businesses, and businesses that rely less on tourism for their clientele
- Tourism recovery in 2021 has been significant for Waiheke, due to its proximity to Auckland and the inability of NZers to travel overseas.

In June this year Auckland Unlimited Programme Manager commented that there had been an ["incredible influx" of Kiwi visitors to both Waiheke](#) and Great Barrier Island. Given this evidence of a rebound to Waiheke tourism, it is unsurprising that a majority of the actions proposed by respondents who *are* engaged in tourism services (quotes below) reflected the wishes of those who are not – that future tourism on Waiheke should focus on low-impact tourism offerings, and that the needs of the community at large should have priority.

Absolutely essential topic to keep Waiheke's uniqueness and look after our environment

Less drinking tours and more nature experiences should be offered.

I would like the impacts on wildlife and the ecosystem to be at the forefront of decision making. There needs to be better quality, affordable housing for workers.

Local residents need to be guaranteed a roof over their head. high end tourism is attracting ppl with money to buy a Bach only live in 6 weeks a year

It would be great to see an increase on Sun-Friday visitors. Maybe booking seats in advance for Saturdays tourism and then capping that (day tourism cap only)

Better, more frequent ferry service during peak travel times. Waiheke residents priority boarding on ferries

Dedicated cycle ways essential, healthy and low impact on the environment.

Collaboration between council, ferry/tourism operators and WITI so tourism can flourish and take into consideration the needs and infrastructure of the community and island. A focus on local skill improvement

More responsibility from the police and fullers to work together to control alcohol abuse on a Saturday - lower prices to get here mid-week and more family friendly options

Support operators who contribute to positive outcomes for the community, including conservation and year round employment.

The domination of Waiheke tourism by Fullers has dictated the Waiheke economy for the last 5 years. The double decker buses stopped daytrippers going into Oneroa, and it took 'Love Oneroa' 3 years to recover from that. *Retail business owner*

II. Implementing tourism management for community and environmental regeneration and wellbeing, and tourism sector sustainability

Key factor – Overtourism impacts long-term will not be addressed effectively without daily non-resident arrivals being regulated to optimal carrying capacity.

Key tenet – Planning for tourism needs to have a priority of goal of providing benefits across the *entire* local community, as set out in the UN WTO goals for tourism development.

Key tenet – Regulation of visitor activity and tourism sector operations has been implemented effectively in many high-volume destinations overseas, and such solutions are equally possible for Waiheke; achieving that will require (i) greater devolution of governance to the Waiheke Local Board, (ii) ongoing consultation with the community as a whole, (iii) regular monitoring of tourism impacts, both benefits and negatives, (iv) an evidence-based calculation of Waiheke's carrying capacity of both residents and tourists to restoration of Waiheke's natural environmental health to pre-2015 levels, and (v) a focus on holistic community and economic planning, rather than on 'destination management'.

Tourism planning

An urgent need for destination management planning was both explicit and implicit in many responses. However residents and interviewees alike emphasised that holistic, whole-of-community planning for the island's integrated economic and community development needed to occur, using the engagement platforms and processes already employed by the Waiheke Local Board and expected by the Waiheke community.

Common themes were:

- The need for holistic, long-term, whole-of-community planning for development of the Waiheke economy and community as a whole, rather than 'destination management' planning
- Devolution of control over tourism planning and infrastructure management, including transport on and to Waiheke, to the Waiheke Local Board, based on a common perception that all departments of Auckland Council, including Auckland Transport and Auckland Unlimited, lack understanding of the infrastructure or other needs of a small, semi-rural island community

- A need for visitor education about Waiheke as a 'sanctuary' - an environmentally fragile environment
- A focus on regenerative eco-tourism, and voluntourism
- Ceasing active promotion of Waiheke as a tourist destination, on the basis that no promotion is needed, given continuing high visitor volumes under pandemic circumstances; or a focus on attracting visitors who genuinely wish to contribute to the island's unique environments
- Ongoing research, funded by government, to monitor the impacts of tourism, positive and negative, on Waiheke's social/community and natural environments and wellbeing

Additional suggestions to support the existing tourism sector on the island included:

- Tourism sector input into the legislation to replace the RMA, to support work accommodation development
- Ministry of Education funding of tourism sector training, provided on Waiheke.

A coordinated whole of the island approach that takes a 20-50 year perspective, is strategic and professionally operated. Ideally, bringing all the passionate but disparity groups together.

All businesses to provide sustainability plans. More education embedded in ecotourism and general tourism around tourism impacts. Increased research on the environmental impacts.

More consultation with the tourism operators on waiheke to give a more positive debate about how to move forward in a sustainable way.

I am hopeful for the future tourism here if a truly sustainable approach can be planned and adopted now, better cooperation among local businesses, stronger sustainability programs and a cohesive strategy is very obviously needed.

Limit the promotion of Waiheke as a destination. It has become outrageously over-priced and over-subscribed. ATEED should focus its money and efforts elsewhere. Publicity only for sustainable tourism. Low-impact tourism only.

Collaboration between council, ferry/tourism operators and WITI so tourism can flourish and take into consideration the needs and infrastructure of the community and island. A focus on local skill improvement.

Training relationship between secondary school and local tourism businesses.

Develop a sustainable eco-tourism model, if we have to have tourism at all....

Publicity only for sustainable tourism low-impact tourism only.

Day trips should not be promoted, nor the double-decker bus tours, nor helicopter tourism. The emphasis should be on tourists who stay longer and to improve infrastructure for locals and tourists alike.

Many respondents wanted to see further robust research to provide a strong evidence-base for ongoing tourism planning, in particular around carrying capacity and level of benefit to the community as a whole.

Annual measure of job and economic benefit to island

Research as to how many visitors Waiheke can sustain in the summer period. Annual measure of job and economic benefit to island.

A report that highlights how many direct and indirect jobs they create on the island.
Research as to how many visitors Waiheke can sustain in the summer period.

Priority focus on low-impact and regenerative tourism and development

Aligned with the recognition that protection is needed for Waiheke's unique community and natural environments, residents' comments focused strongly on establishing Waiheke as an eco-tourism destination. Applying the principle of establishing a living community example for tourists, many of the suggestions for future tourism on Waiheke focused on regeneration. Suggestions to facilitate an eco-tourism focus were:

- Waiheke to become an international model for low-impact and regenerative *living*, by residents and visitors alike
- Promoting low-impact and voluntourism as a core component of *all* tourism on the island
- Focus on educating visitors and tourists, before and during visits
- Council and other government sector funding for tourism development and advertising *only* for low-impact tourism.

Suggestions to facilitate a regenerative tourism focus, while still protecting current Waiheke-based tourism operators who do support regenerative sustainability principles, were:

- Licensing of the tour operators on Waiheke, and limiting the number, with priority to existing long-term businesses
- Prohibiting new tourism businesses, including new visitor accommodation
- Prohibiting cruise boats in or near Waiheke bays.

Promote the Island as a environmentally fragile destination. Appreciate it for its natural beauty. Avoid commercializing everything! e.g. Mid-winter swim in 2021 (at a price!)

A strong focus on environmental protection, dark skies/ quiet skies/marine conservation, peace and tranquillity....the island sanctuary!

I like the vision of the island as a regenerated environmental haven/sanctuary/jewel in the middle of the gulf... and the resulting change to the nature and number of visitors attracted.

More quality, unique, differentiated experiences that attract visitors to experience 'the real Waiheke' rather than replicate Auckland experiences here. Share our natural resources so people come to 'get away'.

... more emphasis on restorative tourism, cultural exchange and voluntourism.

Smaller buses... local as well as tourist. Regulate the number of tour operators on the island. More public toilets All day resident lines during busy times on ferry

... more tourism regarding our bird and ocean wildlife rather than wine, wine, wine

Creation of proper freedom camping sites (and shore overnight camps for kayakers) and dump station. Better mapping of hiking tracks.

Educational video on the ferries re; water conservation, rubbish, etc.

Education about island ecosystems. More environmental tourism opportunities. Easier access for cycling and walking.

Emphasis on environment - attention to roads and footpaths - making Waiheke accessible to all Aucklanders - avoiding intensive building that affects our supply of things like water - more social housing.

Limited destinations for tourists to protect beaches

Walking tours regularly held showing fantastic native tree planting areas all over the island
Electric buses available for transport to venues e.g. vineyard lunches

Encourage low impact, adventure tourism by providing well maintained cycleways on all main roads & walking tracks all over the Island.

Transient "tourists" promote greed, and create a cycle of harm that ends with a depleted island in every way.

Let's present the world with a carbon-free tourist destination

tourism that is sustainable, and really interested in real sustainability. Not just being able to say 'i've been to waiheke'!

Restrictions on daily visitor arrival numbers; visitor levy

Cap on visitor numbers

Many respondents, including people engaged in tourism services, concluded that the only feasible way to avoid future overtourism impacts is to limit visitor numbers, as has been done in high-volume destinations internationally (see **Appendix 1**). The most common suggestions were:

- Passenger and vehicle ferry operations to be government-regulated, to ensure residents' access to essential travel (work, school, health services, etc.)
- Ferries required to provide priority allocations and access to residents and Waiheke businesses, based on calculation of resident/business commuting and transport needs
- Caps on daily visitor numbers, seasonally adjusted and based on priority resident needs
- Compulsory ferry bookings for visitors.

Limit visitors to a sustainable number. Limit cars that can be taken. Cancel the double deckers.

Visitors limited to a certain number per day as they do in other tourist 'hot spots' around the world.

Cap on daily visitors controlled by confirmed ferry bookings.

Keep the ferry to an hourly frequency to limit the number of visitor to a volume the Island can actually sustain.

Limit tourism on Waiheke by requiring a booking system (or similar) for people wanting to visit Waiheke.

Pre-booking ferry tickets for non-residents with a cut off on numbers - not sure if that's possible needs to be looked at.

A cap on visitor numbers. No double-decker buses. A huge reduction in the number of cruise ships visiting Auckland.

One solution to overtourism on Waiheke proposed commonly by the local tourism sector and Auckland Unlimited has been to target long-stay and 'high-value' visitors, with the aim of attracting people who leave more of their spend on the island (rather than only in the

pockets of the ferry companies). However, feasible ways to achieve that goal have focused largely on increasing the ferry costs for visitors; however many Waiheke residents, especially those on medium-low incomes, point out that applying that strategy will result in unaffordability not only for residents' family and friends, but also for the many Aucklanders who are sympathetic to Waiheke's green and community-spirited values. Moreover, there is no evidence that longer-stay or wealthier tourists have any essential sympathy with core Waiheke values, and some long-established tourism retail businesses have commented that daytrippers constitute the mainstay of their clientele, and have a low impact on the Waiheke environment.

Visitor levy to fund infrastructure

A levy or tax on visitors was also a popular suggestion, mostly to fund infrastructure maintenance from tourism impacts, in particular waste management, maintenance of public amenities, and maintenance of beaches, sea and forests, which residents felt should not rely on community labour. A visitor levy was also seen as a way to deter daytrippers.

Restrict the number of people day tripping. Charge a toll for day trippers.

Visitor tax to be levied on non-residents at point of entry to island - funds to be used for infrastructure, environment projects.

Tourist levy to pay for infrastructure.

Charge day-only trippers a "visitor fee"

Have tourists pay a charge on all transport, which would fund initiatives and infrastructure that benefits Waiheke only.

[Tourism operators to] pay a levy which is used to offset impact of their visitors in order to cover things like more public amenities.

... a \$10 user tax per person should be imposed for single visit tourists. This money then go to improve public facilities.

Addressing road safety and traffic congestion

Traffic congestion was identified as a major problem, seriously impeding residents' ability to undertake daily travel for work, business, health, care of others, and other essential purposes. Even in the summer of 2020-2021, residents identified major road congestion due to tourist vehicles, including scooters and e-bikes ridden unsafely, slow visitor vehicles creating a nuisance, major parking congestion causing driver anger, and buses too big to navigate Waiheke roads without danger to pedestrians, other vehicles, and the roading infrastructure. Actions needed urgently to address these problems were as follows:

- Restrict daily visitor vehicle numbers
- A day-tax on non-resident vehicles (excepting for bona fide business purposes)
- Better resident-focused traffic management at Matiatia
- Prohibition on large tour buses, in preference for smaller vans and shuttles
- Prohibition of Fullers double decker buses
- Stronger police traffic management on weekends and during high-volume visitor periods
- Reduced speed limits on all Waiheke roads on weekends

- Better parking areas in Oneroa and near beaches, and policed parking
- More traffic-calming (e.g. speed bumps; 40 km zones in popular roadside walking sites)
- More and better cycle tracks and swales for pedestrians.

A frequent suggestion was for holiday visitor vehicles to be banned completely, as in other [popular island tourist destinations](#), including Rottnest and Hamilton Islands in Australia. Another proposal was for residents' use of Waiheke buses to also be encouraged through a system of small, frequent shuttle bus services to replace the current slow services to and from the ferry. Stronger policing of traffic was seen as necessary, for driving safety generally, rather than only for drink-driving.

Prevent itinerant taxi and tour bus operators; upskill our own.

Cap the number of tourist vehicles on the island.

Get rid of the double decker buses. They are hardly ever full and they are too big and inappropriate

Complete prohibition of double-decker buses. No bus licenses for "tour only" buses - buses ONLY to be linked to some service or location.

Fleet of smaller buses suited to our roads.

Prohibit large tour buses, which cause major traffic hold-ups and are a real danger to people walking around the island and cyclists.

Make cycling round the island safer with continued designated space on the road ... Taxi drivers locals only licenced.

I would like to see a ban on visitor vehicles, and visitor transport provided by a looped system of shuttle buses

Auckland Transport to stop implementing inane 'improvements' at Matiatia; [government] regulation of the ferry service.

Better traffic management at Matiatia

Policing of taxis driving fast and inconsiderately.

A cap *[and]* tax/surcharge on vehicles belonging to non residents, coming onto the Island. No more Fullers double decker Explore buses.

Less cars allowed to come over on holiday weekends and Christmas and New Year

Higher police presence to reduce speeding/unsafe driving on our narrow roads

Noise control *[on]* helicopters, jet skis. Speed bumps Mako St and probably elsewhere. No double decker buses they are too big for the roads and are usually less than quarter full

Public amenities

The inadequacy of the island's public amenities, in particular public toilets and camping sites, was identified as a chronic problem, still unresolved. Council staff acknowledged that the current provision of public toilets, and the budget for maintaining those facilities, had been chronically inadequate to tourist volumes even prior to 2015, and needed major

upgrading. Portaloos might be an effective measure for specific events, but were not a solution for daily tourist volumes at pre-2020 levels.

There was a consensus among research participants that much greater funding by Council is needed for development of the island's infrastructure for basic community needs, let alone to meet the demand placed by high-volume tourism. Many residents commented that both local and central government income from various tourism levies and taxes had yet to be passed on equitably (based on tourist volumes) to the provision or maintenance of public amenities on Waiheke. A dedicated freedom camping area with toilets and pay showers was seen as urgently needed, due to the chronic and acute lack of affordable or available housing for tourism workers.

Investment in amenities -a freedom camping area with bathrooms - more/better public toilets.

Freedom Campers Ban or have a designated area, as I have witness some disgusting acts over summer with freedom campers on blackpool beach.

Ensure infrastructure and services can cope with the demand and supply. i.e. ferries, transport, septic etc.

Building lots more toilet blocks isn't the answer, there's just too many people on the weekends. Banning alcohol on the beaches might help, but it's not a total answer, you can't ban water. *Amenities maintenance crew*

Objectionable visitor behaviour

A common theme among residents' comments was the impact on locals of bad behaviour by tourists, much of which was attributed to misuse of alcohol associated with large parties and events, tourists coming to Waiheke for the specific purpose of getting drunk, intoxicated visitors on the ferries, and insufficient policing of offensive behaviour, including drunk-driving from vineyards by both visitors and locals. Ambulance and health services providers identified high levels of visitor drunkenness contributing to service callouts. Actions recommended by residents included:

- Requirements for *all* licensed premises to decline service to inebriated people
- Capping the number of licensed premises, including alcohol retail outlets
- Mandatory licensing and number limits for large party events including alcohol, even on currently licensed premises
- Declining passenger ferry access to inebriated visitors, both at Matiatia and in Auckland
- Paid security personnel on *all* passenger ferry sailings after 12.00 noon from November to April
- Stronger Police presence on beaches and ferries, at Matiatia, in public places after 10.00 pm, and strong drink-driving monitoring.

More police presence on the road when Island is busy.

Hospitality to tone down (but not kill completely) the Party Island vibe.

Stop businesses selling the island as a get-pissed-at-a-vineyard destination and end the party island BS that this Motu is now known for.

Noise control on helicopters, jet skis. Speed bumps in Mako St and probably elsewhere.

Security on the ferry to enforce good behaviour.

We are in danger of being seen as an island for getting intoxicated and nothing else.

Tourism can be more environmentally focused. At the moment it seems to be to come over and get blotto on wine then sleep it off on the way back.

Waste management

Survey respondents and interviewees alike identified major issues with all aspects of waste management on the island in peak tourism periods. High visitor numbers generate huge additional waste from the hospitality businesses, and through litter from materials that visitors staying on Waiheke bring with them. A large proportion of the services provided by the Waiheke Resources Trust focuses on mitigating waste caused directly or indirectly by tourism, including food rescue from restaurants, native bush restoration, Zero waste management at events, and managing beach litter. Septic waste management is a major problem, as a result of visitors (and part-time residents) ignoring or not understanding the limitations of septic tanks. Domestic septic tanks become overwhelmed as houses are rented out to unknown numbers of holidays occupants beyond the scope of their septic storage capacity; likewise, tenant numbers commonly exceed the bed allocation of houses rented by hospitality workers who can only afford decent accommodation by sharing with large numbers of others, due to both availability and affordability issues.

Specific recommendations from waste management providers were:

- Licensing visitor accommodation for maximum numbers, based on septic tank capacity
- Educating visitors around tourism waste impacts, zero waste goals, and taking their own waste off-island when they leave
- More Council rubbish bins at all beaches and Matiatia
- Levying ferry companies and tourism businesses for waste resulting from tourism-related services.

Steer Waiheke tourism to being a good example of sustainable resource management.

Tourists required to take their rubbish away with them, like in NZ's national and regional parks.

Fullers/Sealink shld include a levy to manage rubbish, drinking water and toilets.

Tourism is great if we have the amenities to service it. public toilets are disgusting in the island and cannot cope with the tourists. rubbish bins get left overflowing.

F. Regulating to prevent overtourism impacts

Collectively, this dismaying array of impacts on the Waiheke community, and on the island's fragile natural environments and infrastructure, clearly parallels the situations in other small communities that are trying to protect the fragile social/community, heritage and natural environments they live in or by, and where local residents have campaigned strenuously to have limits placed on visitor numbers to avoid environmental and/or community collapse. Examples are the resident protests in Barcelona,²⁵ Galapagos,²⁶ Rapanui,²⁷ Venice,²⁸ and recently Hawai'i,²⁹ where island Councils are now responding with regulations to limit hotel numbers, place higher fees on parking and accommodation licenses, and proposing visitor limits that reflect the carrying capacity of the location. For example, Maui's Mayor has proposed that daily visitor numbers should be limited to one third of the island's permanent resident population,³⁰ shuttle buses replace rental car reliance, and "periodic shutdowns of county campgrounds to give the natural resources a break".³¹



Figure 1: Resident protest in Barcelona

Around the globe, governments have acted in the past 7-8 years to enact laws and regulations to protect natural and community environments, in recognition both that these environments are due protection for moral and legal reasons, and that they are an essential component of the tourism attraction itself.

As detailed in **Appendix 1**, protective restrictions have been implemented effectively in many high-volume destinations to achieve the following:

²⁵ "Tourists go home, refugees welcome" <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jun/25/tourists-go-home-refugees-welcome-why-barcelona-chose-migrants-over-visitors> - "Tourist: your luxury trip my daily misery" (2018)

²⁶ "Galapagos rebellion against foreign tourist investment" <https://www.travindy.com/2015/06/galapagos-rebellion-against-foreign-tourism-investment/> (2015)

²⁷ "The Future Of Easter Island Is In Jeopardy, Thanks To Overtourism" <https://travelnoire.com/future-of-easter-island-is-in-jeopardy-overtourism> (2019)

²⁸ "Protest flotilla challenges return of cruise ships to Venice" <https://www.ruptly.tv/en/videos/20210605-054-Italy--Protest-flotilla-challenges-return-of-cruise-ships-into-Venice> (June 2021)

²⁹ "How neighbour island are working to address overtourism in Hawaii" <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/07/how-neighbor-islands-are-working-to-address-overtourism-in-hawaii/> (July 2021)

³⁰ "How neighbour island are working to address overtourism in Hawaii" <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/07/how-neighbor-islands-are-working-to-address-overtourism-in-hawaii/> (July 2021)

³¹ "How neighbour island are working to address overtourism in Hawaii" <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/07/how-neighbor-islands-are-working-to-address-overtourism-in-hawaii/> (July 2021)

- Limiting daily visitor/tourist arrival numbers, to remove congestion, enable residents' access to essential services, and protect and restore natural and heritage environments
- Capping and licensing Airbnb and other holiday accommodation, to mitigate resident housing crises
- Banning or limiting tourist and visitor vehicles, to reduce traffic congestion and protect natural and built environments
- Levying or taxing some tourism activities, to fund infrastructure repairs and maintenance due to tourism impacts
- Banning some tourism activities, to prevent noise, sea and air pollution, littering, and abusive tourist behaviour towards residents
- Closing tourist access to vulnerable or damaged locations, for limited or extended periods, to enable essential restoration
- Restricting some tourist activities, to prevent animal or habitat abuse.

In principle, all of these regulatory options are available to protect Waiheke environments.

What is required is recognition by Auckland Council that they are needed, and urgently, and devolution to the Waiheke Local Board of greater control planning and decision-making related to the island's economic, community and infrastructure development.

Appendix 1: Regulations made by governments to prevent or mitigate the impacts of overtourism

Problem	Regulatory action	Government location	and Source of information
Tourist retail oversupply; undersupply of essential retail			
Oversupply of tourist retail and undersupply of essential retail (e.g. food, pharmacy, health services)	Banned further development of specified tourist retail (e.g. waffle companies, bike hire firms, souvenir shops)	City of Amsterdam – Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam can ban new tourist shops, highest Dutch court rules (2018) (https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2020/04/amsterdam-can-ban-new-tourist-shops-highest-dutch-court-rules/)
Oversupply of tourist retail and undersupply of essential retail (e.g. food, pharmacy, health services)	Prohibited the establishment of new bars and restaurants in the historic city centre.	Copenhagen tourism authorities – Copenhagen, Denmark	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 170-171) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Resident housing undersupply and unaffordability			
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Special Airbnb tax on rental accommodation; removal of Airbnb listings where the Council has intervened because of complaints; 60-day restriction on annual Airbnb 'entire home'.	City of Amsterdam – Amsterdam, Netherlands	The 'Airbnb effect': is it real, and what is it doing to a city like Amsterdam (2016) (https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/oct/06/the-airbnb-effect-amsterdam-fairbnb-property-prices-communities)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Cap of 623,624 total beds for tourists; licence required for Airbnb and similar listings, or fines of up to €400,000 (£361,000); websites face the same fine for advertising premises without a valid licence.	Balearic Islands Government – Balearic Islands, Spain	Balearic Islands caps number of beds available for tourists (2017) (https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/aug/10/balearic-islands-caps-number-of-beds-available-for-tourists)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Holiday rental licence issue suspended in 'El Eixample' area due to residential housing shortages. Owners face fines of up to 60,000 euros for renting unlicensed apartment.	Barcelona City Council – Barcelona, Spain	Barcelona's New Plan to Regulate Vacation Rentals (2021) (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-05/barcelona-s-new-plan-to-regulate-vacation-rentals) "Barcelona exists for its people. The priority is it's a place to live." "We believe that rents should reflect the income of the city's residents" "We're not aiming to demonise tourism but to regulate it," said Arrue (who runs a team of inspectors).
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Imposed a temporary ban of room rentals for less than 30 days.	Barcelona City Council – Barcelona, Spain	Barcelona's New Plan to Regulate Vacation Rentals (2021) (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-05/barcelona-s-new-plan-to-regulate-vacation-rentals)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Visitors pay a tourist tax for accommodation, progressively charged depending on the price of accommodation.	Barcelona City Council – Barcelona, Spain	What is the Barcelona tourist tax and how much is it (2020) (https://www.barcelonayellow.com/barcelona-faq/1042-what-is-barcelona-tourist-tax-and-how-much-is-it)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Permit required to rent 50% or more of main residence for a short period, or risk a fine of €100,000 (£78,000). Landlords able to let individual rooms but must use at least half of apartment themselves.	Berlin City Council – Berlin, Germany	What Airbnb really does to a neighbourhood (2018) (https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45083954)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Nights a homeowner is able to rent out capped to 70 (which cities can increase to 100).	Danish government - Denmark	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 170-171) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Capped the maximum number of licences for accommodation on the island; fine of €20,000 to 40,000 euros for an unlicensed apartment, and up to €400,000 for the hosting platform.	Mallorca Government – Mallorca, Spain	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 196-197) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Banned short term rentals of private homes.	Palma de Mallorca Council – Palma de Mallorca, Spain	Palma in Spain’s Balearic Islands bans almost all Airbnb-style rentals (2018) (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-airbnb-spain-palma-idUSKBN1HX1VX)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Made illegal to rent apartments for <30 consecutive unless host is present (NYC).	New York State government – New York City, USA	Short-Term Rental Laws in Major U.S. Cities (2020) (https://www.2ndaddress.com/research/short-term-rental-laws/)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Restricted renting primary residence to a 120 days p.a. max.	City of Paris – Paris, France	Paris authorities rule to restrict short-term rental operations (2021) (https://shorttermrental.com/news/paris-restrictions/)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Prohibit renting a residence in a building with >5 apartments. All residents of a building need to approve use of apartments for tourism.	Salzburg magistrate - Salzburg, Austria	Strict rules for Airbnb (2017) (https://europakonsument.at/en/page/strict-rules-airbnb)
Residential housing shortages and unaffordability	Require Airbnb to obtain rental licences. Limit rental of entire property to 90 days p.a.	City of San Francisco – San Francisco, USA	San Francisco’s Airbnb Registration Process (https://www.letulet.com/blog/airbnb-hosting-in-san-francisco-2019-legal-requirements)
Overcrowding of tourism destinations			
Overcrowding of city centre	Banned tours of ‘red light’ district. (No longer acceptable to see sex workers as a tourist attraction)	City of Amsterdam – Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam to ban 'disrespectful' tours of red-light district (2019) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/amsterdam-to-ban-disrespectful-tours-of-red-light-district)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Overcrowding of city centre	Capped people allowed on organised tours of old city centre at 15.	Amsterdam City Council, 2020 - Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam to ban 'disrespectful' tours of red-light district (2019) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/amsterdam-to-ban-disrespectful-tours-of-red-light-district)
Overcrowding of cultural attractions	Capped people allowed in Parc Guell's Monument Area at 400; tourists charged an entry fee	Barcelona City Council – Barcelona, Spain	Overtourism solutions from Responsible Travel (2020) (https://www.responsibletravel.com/copy/overtourism-in-barcelona)
Overcrowding of city centre	Implemented a 75-pound penalty notice to curb punt touts.	Cambridge City Council – Cambridge, UK	As touting for punt trips becomes a crime, is tourism overwhelming Britain's cities (2017) (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/29/cambridge-tourist-boom-ruins-city)
Overcrowding of city centre	Restricted access and parking in overcongested areas (Sa Calobra/Cala Tuent, Formentor/Port de Valldemossa)	Mallorca Government – Mallorca, Spain	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 196-197) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Traffic congestion	Forbids parking and closes city streets during the local cultural processions.	Local Echternach authorities –Luxembourg	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 166-167) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Overcrowding of cultural attractions	Capped people who can climb the ramparts at 4000 per day.	City of Dubrovnik - Dubrovnik, Croatia	12 places you shouldn't travel to in 2018 (2018) (https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/places-to-avoid-2018/index.html)
Overcrowding of cultural attractions	Tickets must be purchased in advance (Machu Picchu)	Peruvian government - Cuzco, Peru	Machu Picchu Visitor Guide (2016) (http://www.andeantravelweb.com/peru/destinations/machu-picchu/index.html)
Overcrowding of city centre	Banned Segway tours in Prague's old town.	Prague City Council, Prague, Czech Republic	Two wheels bad: Prague bans Segways (2016) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/20/two-wheels-bad-prague-bans-segways)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Overcrowding of natural attractions	Capped daily visitors to the Mogao Grottoes at 6000 . Tickets must be purchased in advance.	Dunhuang Academy – Dunhuang, China	China Focus_ Record tourist numbers threaten world-renowned grottoes (2017) (http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-08/01/c_136491782.htm)
Overcrowding of city centre	City centre regulated as “protected zones”, made car free.	Salzburg Tourism Agency – Salzburg, Austria	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 213-214) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Overcrowding of island Infrastructure stressed	Cap on cruise visitors at 8000 a day.	Santorini Council, Greece	Santorini Is Capping Cruise Ship Tourism (2018) https://thepointsguy.com/news/santorini-is-capping-cruise-ship-tourism/
Overcrowding – city centre, attractions, heritage sites, residential areas	Segregated tourists and residents, residents given a special travel ID. Tourist movement restricted. Cap on visitor numbers; visitor pre-booking introduced.	Venice Municipality - Venice, Italy	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 233-234) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf) https://news.sky.com/story/venice-to-demand-tourists-pre-book-city-visit-on-app-to-tackle-tourist-overcrowding-12400694
Overcrowding of city centre	Made historic city centre pedestrian only.	Tallinn City Council – Tallinn, Estonia	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 223-224) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Overcrowding of waterways	Banned cruise ships from the Guidecca Canal and introduced landing charges for boats.	Venice Municipality – Venice, Italy	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 233-234) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Infrastructure stresses and costs from overtourism			
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Implemented a flat fee of 3 Euros per person, per night, for any visitor spending time in the city.	Amsterdam City Council, Amsterdam, Netherlands	2020 Amsterdam Tourist Tax_ All there is to know! (2019) (https://www.clinkhostels.com/guide/2020-amsterdam-tourist-tax-all-there-is-to-know/)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Implemented a 20 Euro entry fee for tourists.	Myanmar Ministry of Culture – Bagan, Myanmar	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 156 – 157) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Tourists must pay a \$65 Sustainable Development Fee that pays for free education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation for citizens.	Bhutanese government - Bhutan	Frequently Asked Questions: Tourism Council of Bhutan (2021) (https://www.bhutan.travel/page/frequently-asked-questions)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Imposed a ¥1,000 departure tax, towards building and maintaining tourist infrastructure.	Japanese government - Japan	Bali considering a tourist tax (2019) (https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/bali-tourist-tax/index.html)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Implemented a Municipal Tourist Tax.	Lisbon City Council- Lisbon, Portugal	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 190-191) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Implemented a tourist tax (< 1 franc) “... does little to deter visitors however and has seen little effectiveness.”	Canton of Luzern – Luzern, Switzerland	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 192-193) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Implemented a 4 euro 'eco-tax'.	Balaeric Government – Balaeric Islands, Spain	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 196-197) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Visitors pay a 5-euro tax that goes towards improving local infrastructure.	Maltese national Government - Malta	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 229-230) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Infrastructure costs & stresses	Visitors pay 1 euro per night visitor tax.	Municipality of Vilnius – Vilnius, Lithuania	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 235-236) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Prevent tourist behaviour damaging community			
Tourists' disrespectful behaviour towards residents	Banned tours of 'red light' district. "It is no longer acceptable in this age to see sex workers as a tourist attraction" city councillor Udo Kock said.	City of Amsterdam – Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam to ban 'disrespectful' tours of red-light district (2019) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/amsterdam-to-ban-disrespectful-tours-of-red-light-district)
Tourists disrespectful behaviour towards residents	Tour guides required to have a council permit and observe strict rules of behaviour for groups.	Amsterdam City Council – Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam to ban 'disrespectful' tours of red-light district (2019) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/amsterdam-to-ban-disrespectful-tours-of-red-light-district)
Noise pollution	Regulated when entertainment facilities can open/close to reduce noise pollution.	Hungarian Tourism Agency – Budapest, Hungary	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 164– 165) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Noise pollution	Tour guides require licenses to operate in the city. Groups >25 need to use earphones during the tour, sound amplification is forbidden, and unpermitted behaviour can result in a €250 fine.	Bruges City Council – Bruges, Belgium	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 160– 161) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Noise pollution	Banned the ‘Beer-Bike’ in districts at risk of noise pollution.	Hungarian Tourism Agency – Budapest, Hungary	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 164– 165) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Tourists’ disrespectful behaviour towards residents	Implemented stricter regulations to reduce alcohol and sex tourism.	Latvian Police – Riga, Latvia	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 207-208) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Noise pollution	Tour guides are required to use a radio-system to communicate to groups.	Vatican management – Vatican City	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 231-232) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Environmental impacts of overtourism			
Litter and related pollution	Close city centre streets on busy evenings to allow for cleaning.	Amsterdam City Council – Amsterdam, Netherlands	Amsterdam to ban 'disrespectful' tours of red-light district (2019) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/20/amsterdam-to-ban-disrespectful-tours-of-red-light-district)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Fragile environment at risk	Regulation that tourism operators must maintain tour vessels, aircraft, and equipment in suitable condition for safe operation under Antarctic conditions.	IAATO members – Antarctica IAATO membership is voluntary and has little regulatory power.	IAATO Bylaws (2021) (https://iaato.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IAATO-Bylaws-Updated-April-2021-1.pdf)
Fragile environment at risk	Antarctic - vessels of > 500 passengers cannot land; must maintain a min staff to visitor ratio of 1:20 ashore; restrictions on time and place of landing.	IAATO members - Antarctica	IAATO Bylaws (2021) (https://iaato.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IAATO-Bylaws-Updated-April-2021-1.pdf)
Fragile environment at risk	Only a licensed tour operator can book travel. Guests must book a licensed tour (a minimum of \$200 per day).	Bhutanese government - Bhutan	Frequently Asked Questions: Tourism Council of Bhutan (2021) (https://www.bhutan.travel/page/frequently-asked-questions)
Fragile environment at risk	Prohibits new construction on banks of Bled Lake. Only allows swimming in allocated areas.	Bled Municipality – Bled, Slovenia	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 158 – 159) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Fragile environment at risk	Closed Boracay Island to tourists for six months following concerns about damage.	Philippine Government – Philippines	Philippines to temporarily close popular tourist island Boracay (2018) (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43650627) ‘[President] Duterte said Boracay was turning into a "cesspool"’
Fragile environment at risk	Require visitors to be guided, show a return airline ticket, show a letter from a hotel/resident inviting them, and are provided a special transit card which restricts movement.	Ecuadorian national government – Galapagos Islands, Ecuador	Planning a Trip Galapagos Conservancy, Inc. (n.d) (https://www.galapagos.org/travel/travel/planning-a-trip/)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Fragile environment at risk	Local Environment Plan (2010) limits visitors to 400 at any one time.	Lord Howe Island Board – Lord Howe island, Australia	Lord Howe Island population doubles as tourists descend after COVID ban ends (2021) (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-07/tourists-flock-to-lord-howe-island-after-covid-ban/13035770)
Fragile environment at risk	Banned solo climbers, visually impaired people, climbers under 16, and double amputees, as groups at risk of dying.	Nepalese tourism board – Mt Everest, Nepal	Nepal bans blind people and double amputees from climbing Everest (2017) https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42521138
Fragile environment at risk	Closed Maya Beach 4 months for environmental recovery. Access now 2000 people per day. Boats must dock outside the bay. Smoking and littering banned.	Tourism authority of Thailand – Maya Beach, Thailand	Thai bay made famous by film 'The Beach' to close for four months (2018) (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-tourism-idUSKCN1I00KF)
Fragile environment at risk	Closed tourism at Reykjadular to prevent environmental damage.	Iceland Environmental Agency – Reykjadular, Iceland	Tourist traffic temporarily closed off for fragile nature paths (2018) (https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/nature_and_travel/2018/03/31/tourist_traffic_temporarily_closed_off_for_fragile_/)
Fragile environment at risk	Fine tourists who take sand from beaches.	Italian police – Sardinia, Italy	Tourists fined 2580 pounds for taking sand and shells from Sardinia beach (2021) (https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/sardinia-beach-tourists-fine-shells-sand-b1860873.html)
Animal welfare/habitat at risk	Visitors not allowed to drive through protected animal habitats.	Yellowstone Park Service – Yellowstone, USA	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 239-240) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Fragile environment at risk	Permits required to land on the island. Daily visitors capped at 180.	Irish government – Skellig Michael, Ireland	The force reawakens as Skellig Michael reopens to visitors (2021) (https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-force-reawakens-as-skellig-michael-reopens-to-visitors-1.4609090)
Animal welfare/habitat at risk	Made illegal to burden animals with >100kg; regulation interpreted as a ban on overweight tourists burdening animals.	Greek national government – Santorini, Greece	Santorini to target overweight tourists with donkey weight limit (2018) (https://people.com/home/greece-bans-overweight-tourists-from-riding-the-famous-donkeys-of-santorini/)
Protection of heritage, culture, etc			
Heritage sites at risk	Divided into three zones with different levels of regulation; one where further development is strictly prohibited.	Myanmar Ministry of Culture- Bagan, Myanmar	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 156 – 157) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Traditional culture at risk	Only boats allowed on Bled lake are traditional ‘pletnas’.	Bled Municipality – Bled, Slovenia	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 158 – 159) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)
Heritage sites at risk	Visitors only allowed into Machu Picchu during the morning (6am-noon) or afternoon (noon-5.30pm). Group size is limited to 16. Visitors not allowed to bring large bags, umbrellas, music instruments, shoes with heels, food, and alcoholic drink; smoking prohibited.	Decentralized Culture Directorate of Cusco – Cuzco, Peru	Research for TRAN Committee – Overtourism impact and possible policy responses (pp. 194-195) (2018) (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf)

Problem	Regulatory action	Government and location	Source of information
Heritage sites at risk	Limits the number of visitors at the Alhambra to 6600 per day, and limits the number of visitors to the Nasrid Palaces to 300 per half-hour.	The Council of the Alhambra – Granada, Spain	Rules to visit the Alhambra (n.d.) (https://www.alhambra.org/en/alhambra-rules.html)

Appendix 2: Research methods

Research was designed to obtain comprehensively triangulated input from the broad range of stakeholders relevant to the impacts of tourism on Waiheke, visitor satisfaction, and the impacts of the pandemic on the Waiheke tourism business sector, for the period 2015-2021.

Social media analysis

Monitoring of five Waiheke social media sites occurred from December 2020 to May 2021 inclusive, to identify the most common themes relevant to tourism on Waiheke during that period. Posts were included in the data set that were directly or indirectly related to tourism factors (e.g. accommodation; water supply). The content of posts included in the data set were analysed using content analysis to identify common themes. For each key theme identified, representative contributor comments were provided in the analysis. Data were further organised into two seasonal periods – summer (December 2020-February 2021) and autumn (March-May 2021). A comparative analysis was also undertaken looking for any differences in post content across these two periods. A separate report on the social media analysis is available from *Project Forever Waiheke* Convenor (at pam.oliver.waiheke@gmail.com).

Interviews

Interviews (n=23) were undertaken on Waiheke in March-May 2021, by an experienced independent researcher/community development consultant, [Kellie Spee Consultancy](#), Bay of Plenty. Interviewees were the management personnel of Waiheke's essential health, emergency and infrastructure services (health and emergency services; water, waste management, wildlife and conservation/regeneration services; transport, infrastructure and accommodation services; budgeting and community advice/support) and local governance (Local Board). They were recruited by *Project Forever Waiheke* committee members by email and phone. Interviews were between 30 and 60 minutes, and held at each interviewee's usual place of work or a neutral venue. Questions focused on positive and negative impacts of Waiheke tourism in relation to the services that interviewees managed, and interviewees' perceptions of actions needed to mitigate negative tourism impacts and promote tourism benefits to the community in future. Data were analysed by two independent researchers, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, and sorted into key emergent themes.

Surveys

Three surveys were designed to obtain views from key stakeholders – residents, visitors, and the Waiheke tourism business sector. Surveys included the following features:

- Surveys were disseminated via mailing lists and FB posts (*Project Forever Waiheke*, Waiheke Island Tourism Inc, Tourism Waiheke) in March-June 2021
- Screening questions were used to screen out irrelevant responses
- Survey questions canvassed the following broad topics:

Visitors [n=991]

- Level of satisfaction on a range of visit parameters
- What visitors liked most or didn't like about their most recent visit

Waiheke tourism business sector [n=98]

- Impacts of the pandemic on businesses

- Sector needs for the future

Residents [n=294]

- Positive and negative impacts of tourism for residents, including those engaged in tourism operations
- Perceived optimal tourist numbers in the future
- Actions needed “to manage future tourism on Waiheke and its impacts”
- Other comments “about future tourism on Waiheke”
- Ratings data were analysed for frequencies, percentages, and crosstabulations to identify possible relationships between ratings and respondents sociographic attributes (e.g. length of residence on Waiheke; whether engaged in tourism services).
- Open comments were analysed using thematic analysis³² to identify key emergent themes.

Findings were also included from an online survey of Waiheke residents undertaken in mid-2020 by *Project Forever Waiheke*, in collaboration with the University of Auckland School of Environment, to investigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Waiheke tourism sector and residents’ views of the positive and negative impacts of the tourism downturn during pandemic lockdowns.

Evidence review of overtourism impacts and destination management

A graduate researcher from the University of Auckland School of Environment undertook an evidence review of academic (peer-reviewed) and ‘grey’ literature related to the management of overtourism and its impacts internationally, in particular in small, semi-rural and/or island communities experiencing high-volume tourism resulting in damage to community and natural environments. The data were collated into themes reflecting key impacts where governments had introduced legislation, regulation or policy to mitigate tourism impacts. This report includes government legislative and regulatory actions.

³² Using [Braun and Clarke’s \(2006\)](#) process.

Appendix 3: Waiheke tourism business sector – Pandemic impacts

Respondent characteristics

In total, 98 people completed the survey between March and July 2021. The majority of the businesses represented by those respondents were more than 5 years old (77%), with 18% 2-5 years old and 5% less than 2 years old. Most respondents were owner-managers (80%), with 16% managers-not-owner, and 4% owners not managing the business. A majority (68%) had been managing the business for more than 5 years, 20% for 3-5 years, and 12% for 0-2 years. Most respondents lived on Waiheke (89%), or did prior to the pandemic (4%), with only 7% residing elsewhere. Two thirds of the businesses represented were entirely tourism-based (64%), with the rest attributing tourism custom to around half (13%), a quarter (16%) or less than one tenth (5%) of their business income.

Employment patterns

Table 1a compares the mean number of FTE workers employed in various tourism-related businesses between the end of February 2020 (pre-pandemic) and February 2021, showing a small reduction in workers across all industries except the arts. Unsurprisingly, the reductions in workers were somewhat greater for businesses dedicated to tourism than for businesses whose income came also from non-tourism sources.

	Transpt	Food/ dining	Wine & alcohol	Accom	Arts	Outdoor	Retail	Other
Mean 2020	6.1	15.2	11.6	7.1	2.8	8.7	1.5	7.5
Mean 2021	6.95	13.5	8.4	5.64	3.15	5.88	1	6.3

Business income and economic sustainability

Table 2a shows that business income reduction for the 2020/2021 financial year compared with pre-pandemic levels was most common in transport and outdoor activities, and also in hospitality. In contrast, some businesses experienced a small increase in income across those financial periods.

	Transpt	Food/ dining	Wine & alcohol	Accom	Arts	Outdoor	Retail	Other
Increased >10%	10%	6%	7%	21%	10%	--	33%	20%
Increased >25%	5%	--	--	7%	--	13%	33%	10%
Roughly same	5%	12%	27%	--	10%	13%	--	10%
Decreased >10%	--	24%	27%	29%	30%	13%	--	20%
Decreased >25%	76%	59%	40%	36%	40%	63%	33%	20%

Nonetheless, **Table 3a** shows that positive business confidence remains around 50%, and was highest amongst wine and accommodation businesses, longer-established businesses, and businesses that rely less on tourism itself for their clientele.

Table 3a: Business confidence in same or increased revenue in the 2021 calendar year	
Very confident	11%
Somewhat confident	38%
Not very confident	19%
Not at all confident	26%
Not sure/ No idea	6%

These figures reflect the most recent confidence reports from [ANZ](#) and [the NZ Institute of Economic Research](#), that NZ business confidence in general remains good and is increasing. A similar [report by the UN WTO](#) in June 2021 notes that as tourism numbers pick up internationally, confidence in that sector is also improving. The [continuing high popularity of Waiheke](#) to both Aucklanders and other NZers last summer, together with predictions that our international travel bubble suspensions will keep most Kiwis at home this summer, suggest that Waiheke is likely to see at least the same visitor rates as in summer 2020/2021. Once international borders re-open, numbers are anticipated to increase again; recent applications by Waiheke tourism operators for new licences for helicopter landings and a new zipline suggest that longer-established tourism businesses on Waiheke are planning for a significant revival.

Table 4a shows the measures taken by Waiheke businesses to sustain economic viability through 2020 and beyond. Following an initial common reliance on the COVID subsidies from government, businesses have been highly creative in their actions to sustain their operations, as evidenced in the actions listed in **Table 4a**. A common theme was the community-oriented focus of local businesses towards staff retention; two [Waiheke businesses also won Qualmark awards](#) this year for ‘aroha and community spirit’ in their operations during the pandemic. However, as indicated in **Table 4a**, many respondents ‘pivoted’ into other income streams or changed the focus of their business away from a reliance on tourism.

Table 4a: Business action to build business sustainability	
Accessed one or more of the government’s COVID subsidies or grants	84%
Increased marketing activity	63%
Management worked longer hours or took on additional roles/tasks	59%
Reduced staffing levels or costs	44%
Reduced advertising costs	37%
Borrowed funds	20%
Earned income from a new source	18%
Changed the nature of the business	16%
Joined WITI	12%
Something else (refocused marketing; sold plant; passed costs to customers)	7%
Changed premises	5%
Sold part of the business	4%

Table 5a indicates that businesses see the continuing low visitor numbers as the main threat to business economic sustainability, although wage costs and worker supply were anticipated issues for around half of businesses. Those figures may as change government reconsiders permits for overseas workers in some categories, or NZers reconsider their work choices for greater reliability long-term.

Table 5a: Main challenges to business viability 2021-22	
Low visitor numbers	74%
Finding workers	49%
Wage costs	41%
Worker accommodation	32%

In response to a question around desired other supports for business viability, the most common responses were for tax or GST relief (55%), low-interest loans (26%), a range of government actions (15%), in particular NZ tourism promotion, regulatory change to address worker accommodation or anticipated worker shortages, and re-opening NZ international borders.